No. 1833

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Commando

WAR STORIES IN PICTURES

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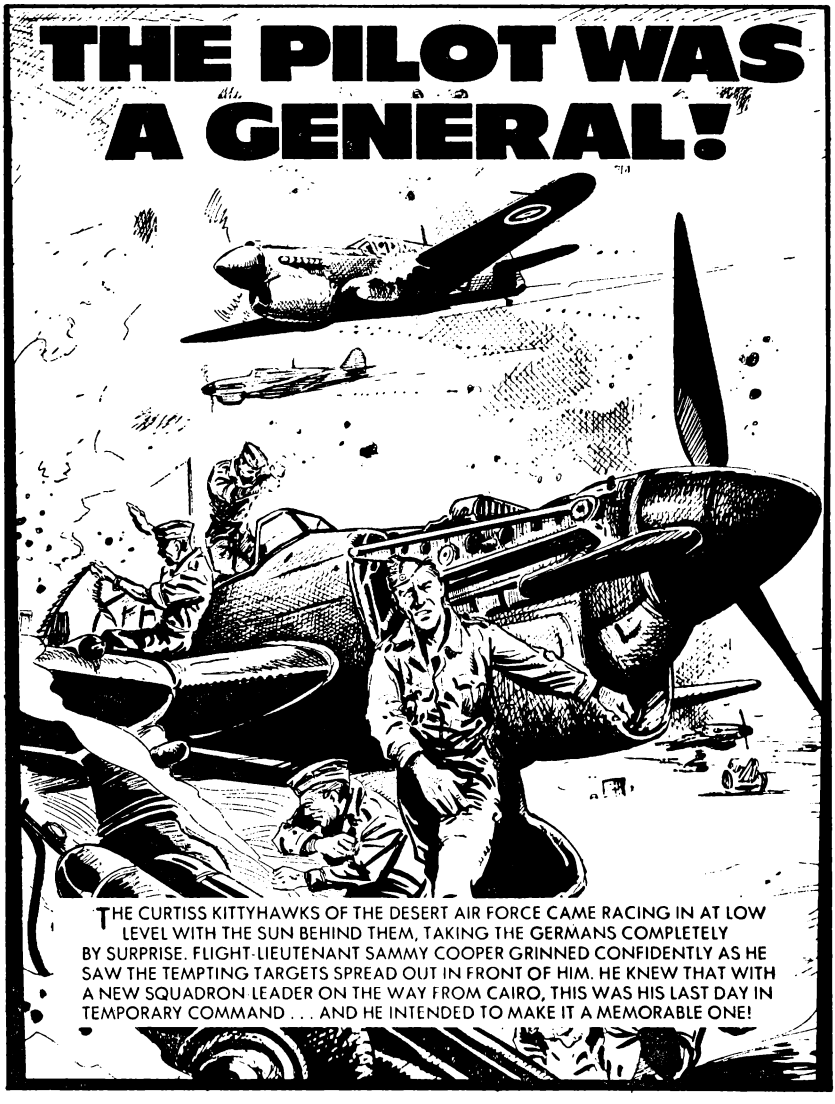
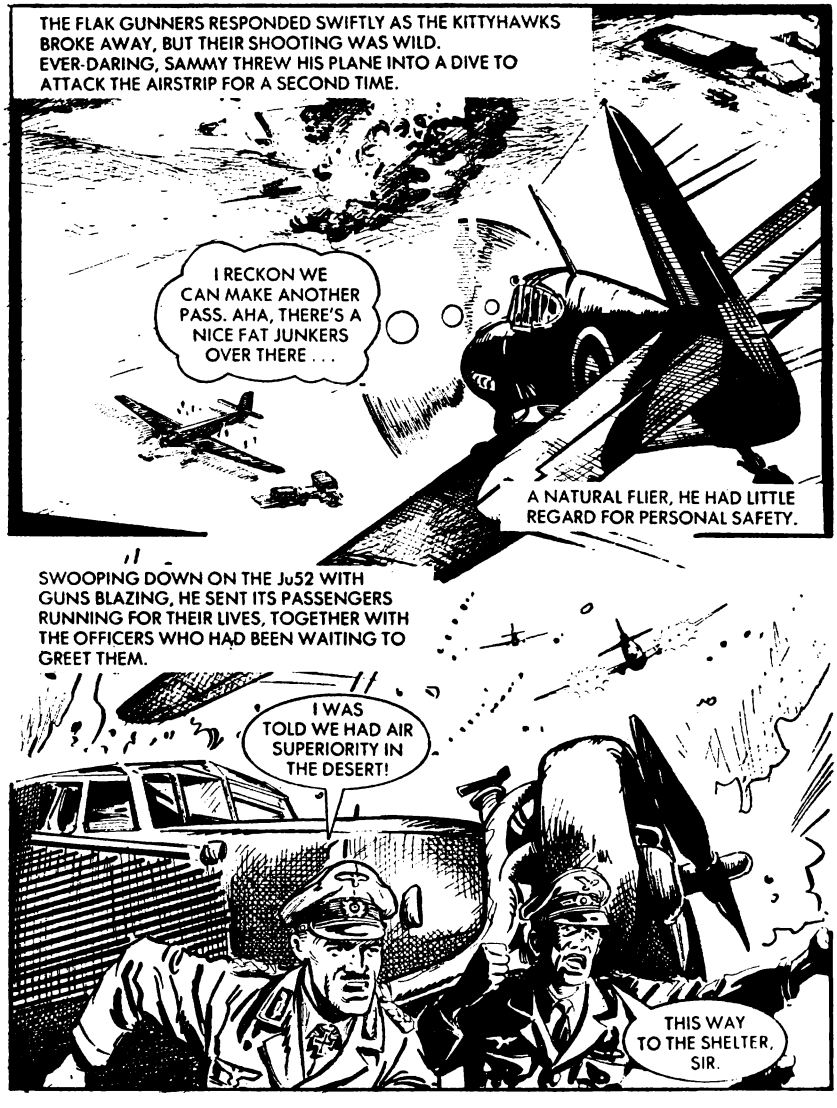
THE PILOT WAS A GENERAL!

Stars of Soccer — Paul McStay

THE PILOT WAS A GENERAL!

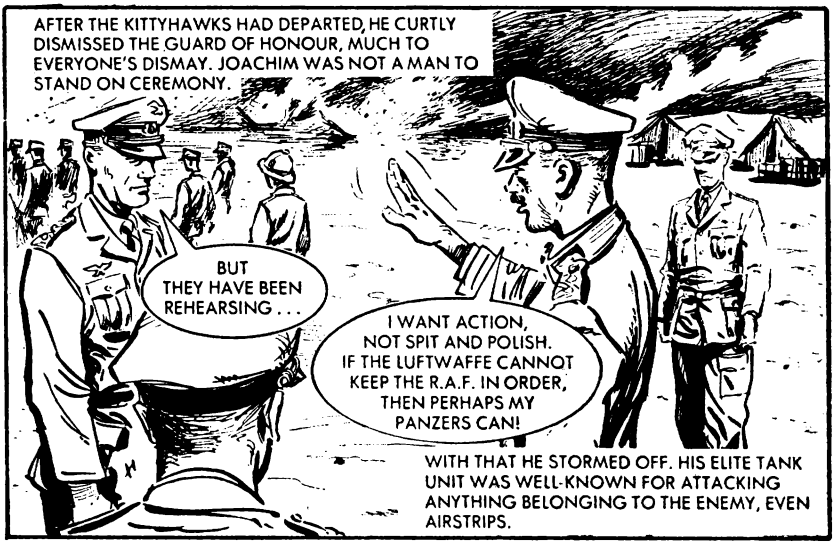


THE CURTISS KITTYHAWKS OF THE DESERT AIR FORCE CAME RACING IN AT LOW LEVEL WITH THE SUN BEHIND THEM, TAKING THE GERMANS COMPLETELY BY SURPRISE. FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT SAMMY COOPER GRINNED CONFIDENTLY AS HE SAW THE TEMPTING TARGETS SPREAD OUT IN FRONT OF HIM. HE KNEW THAT WITH A NEW SQUADRON LEADER ON THE WAY FROM CAIRO, THIS WAS HIS LAST DAY IN TEMPORARY COMMAND . . . AND HE INTENDED TO MAKE IT A MEMORABLE ONE!


THE FLAK GUNNERS RESPONDED SWIFTLY AS THE KITTYHAWKS BROKE AWAY, BUT THEIR SHOOTING WAS WILD. EVER-DARING, SAMMY THREW HIS PLANE INTO A DIVE TO ATTACK THE AIRSTRIP FOR A SECOND TIME.
I RECKON WE CAN MAKE ANOTHER PASS. AHA, THERE'S A NICE FAT JUNKERS OVER THERE . . .
A NATURAL FLIER, HE HAD LITTLE REGARD FOR PERSONAL SAFETY.
SWOOPING DOWN ON THE Ju52 WITH GUNS BLAZING, HE SENT ITS PASSENGERS RUNNING FOR THEIR LIVES, TOGETHER WITH THE OFFICERS WHO HAD BEEN WAITING TO GREET THEM.
I WAS TOLD WE HAD AIR SUPERIORITY IN THE DESERT!
THIS WAY TO THE SHELTER, SIR.

THE LARGE RECEPTION COMMITTEE WAS THERE TO WELCOME GENERAL JOACHIM DOERNER WHO HAD JUST ARRIVED TO TAKE OVER AN ARMOURED DIVISION BASED AT THIS GERMAN AIRFIELD. IN THE TRENCH, THE JERRY SQUADRON COMMANDER HUMBLY OFFERED AN EXPLANATION, ONLY TO BE REPRIMANDED BY THE RAGING GENERAL.

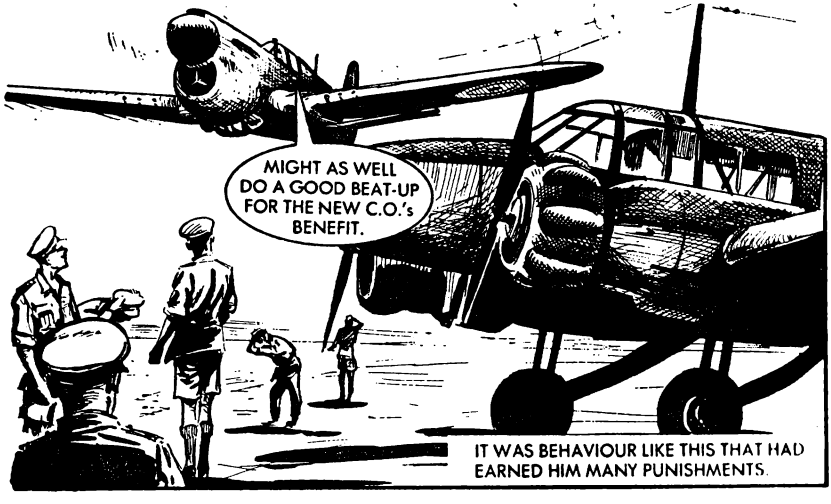
AFTER THE KITTYHAWKS HAD DEPARTED, HE CURTLY DISMISSED THE GUARD OF HONOUR, MUCH TO EVERYONE'S DISMAY. JOACHIM WAS NOT A MAN TO STAND ON CEREMONY.



WITH THAT HE STORMED OFF. HIS ELITE TANK UNIT WAS WELL-KNOWN FOR ATTACKING ANYTHING BELONGING TO THE ENEMY, EVEN AIRSTRIPS.

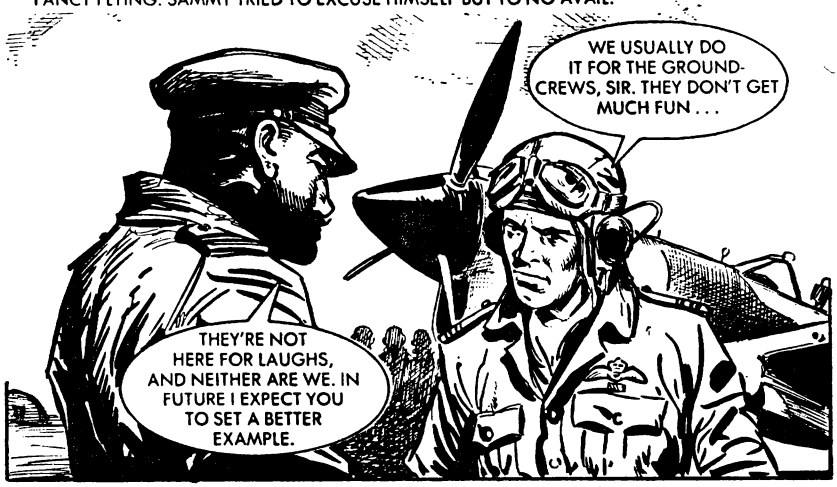
MEANWHILE HIGH ABOVE THE SCORCHING SANDS, SAMMY GLOOMILY LED HIS VICTORIOUS FORMATION BACK TO BASE. HE KNEW HE WAS GOING TO MISS BEING IN COMMAND, FOR HE HAD ENJOYED MAKING THE DECISIONS.

EVENTUALLY THEY REACHED THEIR OWN BASE. COMING IN TO LAND, SAMMY NOTICED THERE WAS A HEADQUARTERS ANSON ON THE AIRSTRIP. HE DIVED TOWARDS IT, SENDING HIS KITTYHAWK INTO A WRENCHING BARREL ROLL SCANT FEET ABOVE THE GROUND.



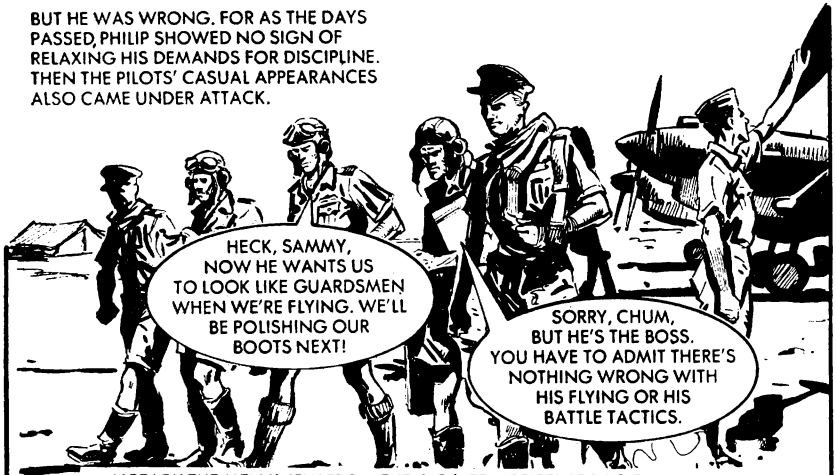
FOR SEVERAL MINUTES HE KEPT EVERYONE DUCKING . . . INCLUDING SQUADRON-LEADER PHILIP DREW, HIS NEW COMMANDING OFFICER. EVENTUALLY TIRING OF HIS GAME, HE EXPERTLY LANDED HIS KITTYHAWK. HOWEVER, WHEN HE SAW THE LOOK ON THE NEW MAN'S FACE HE FELT THE STIRRINGS OF UNEASE.

PHILIP WAS A VERY EXPERIENCED, REGULAR OFFICER — HE SOON MADE IT CRYSTAL CLEAR THAT HE DID NOT APPROVE OF LOW OR FANCY FLYING. SAMMY TRIED TO EXCUSE HIMSELF BUT TO NO AVAIL.



SAMMY LISTENED QUIETLY, FOR HE DID NOT WANT TO MAKE THINGS WORSE BY ARGUMENT. INSTEAD HE RESERVED HIS COMMENTS FOR HIS PAL, FLYING OFFICER " CHALKY" WHITE, WHO HAD OVERHEARD THE CONVERSATION.

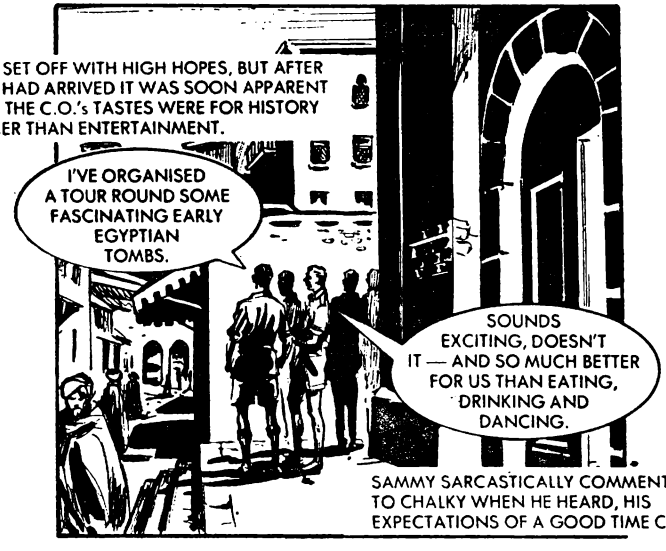
BUT HE WAS WRONG. FOR AS THE DAYS PASSED, PHILIP SHOWED NO SIGN OF RELAXING HIS DEMANDS FOR DISCIPLINE. THEN THE PILOTS' CASUAL APPEARANCES ALSO CAME UNDER ATTACK.



ALREADY THE MEN KNEW FROM THE C.O.'s FEW BRIEFINGS SO FAR THAT HE WAS A MASTER OF AIR COMBAT. ALTHOUGH THEY FOUND SOME OF HIS RULES HARD TO ACCEPT, THEY HAD FULL CONFIDENCE, GIVING HIM THEIR LOYAL SUPPORT.

A WEEK LATER, PHILIP CALLED HIS FOUR SENIOR PILOTS TO A MEETING.
THE SQUADRON IS BEING RESTED FOR A FEW DAYS.
ABOUT TIME, TOO. I HAVEN'T BEEN ON LEAVE FOR AGES.

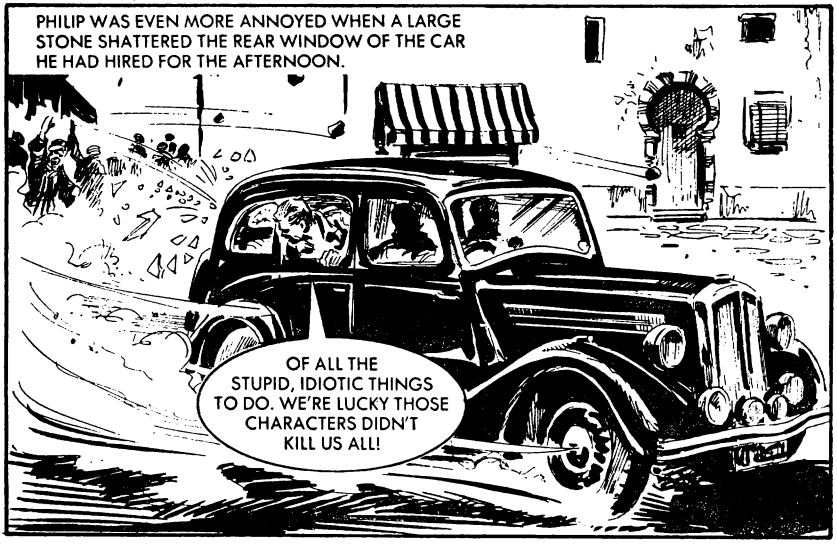
HE HAD BEEN ORDERED TO CAIRO FOR A SHORT COURSE ON FIGHTER TACTICS. HE WANTED THEM TO ACCOMPANY HIM.
YOU CHAPS HAVE EARNED A BREAK. WE LEAVE IN THE MORNING.
HEAR THAT? WE'RE GOING TO PAINT THE TOWN RED!


THEY SET OFF WITH HIGH HOPES, BUT AFTER THEY HAD ARRIVED IT WAS SOON APPARENT THAT THE C.O.'s TASTES WERE FOR HISTORY RATHER THAN ENTERTAINMENT.
I'VE ORGANISED A TOUR ROUND SOME FASCINATING EARLY EGYPTIAN TOMBS.
SOUNDS EXCITING, DOESN'T IT — AND SO MUCH BETTER FOR US THAN EATING, DRINKING AND DANCING.
SAMMY SARCASTICALLY COMMENTED TO CHALKY WHEN HE HEARD, HIS EXPECTATIONS OF A GOOD TIME CRUSHED.

TRAMPING AROUND DUSTY TOMBS IN THE BLISTERING HEAT WAS NOT SAMMY'S IDEA OF FUN. PHILIP, HOWEVER, WAS LOVING IT —
SOMEHOW THERE'S STILL AN ATMOSPHERE ABOUT THESE PLACES. ONE CAN ALMOST FEEL THE PRESENCE OF THE GREAT PRIESTS AND PHARAOHS.
HMM. THAT'S GIVEN ME AN IDEA. IT'S TIME THIS TOUR WAS LIVENED UP A BIT. IF I NIPPED IN THERE . . . .

HIDING INSIDE A CERTAIN COFFIN UNTIL THE OTHERS RETURNED, SAMMY LET FLY WITH AN EERIE WAIL THAT ECHOED AROUND THE SHADOWY TOMB. ITS EFFECT ON THE HEARERS WAS ALL THAT HE COULD HAVE WISHED.
OOOOHHH!
WHAT IN THE NAME OF . . . OUCH!
AAAGH! THE PRIEST, HOPT RAH, HAS RETURNED!
IN HIS TERROR THEIR EGYPTIAN GUIDE LEAPT BACK, UNWITTINGLY PUNCHING THE C.O. IN THE EYE.

UNFORTUNATELY THE JOKE BACK-FIRED. WHEN HE EMERGED, TEARS OF LAUGHTER STREAMING DOWN HIS CHEEKS, A CROWD OF ANGRY LOCALS, NOT AMUSED BY HIS DISRESPECT, PURSUED THE FLEEING AIRMEN. A DIRE WARNING IN ROUGH ENGLISH ECHOED AFTER THEM —
THE CURSE OF HOPT RAH WILL BE UPON YOU, DEFILERS OF TOMBS!
RUN! WE'VE GOT TO GET AWAY, OR THEY'LL TEAR US TO BITS!


PHILIP WAS EVEN MORE ANNOYED WHEN A LARGE STONE SHATTERED THE REAR WINDOW OF THE CAR HE HAD HIRED FOR THE AFTERNOON.
OF ALL THE STUPID, IDIOTIC THINGS TO DO. WE'RE LUCKY THOSE CHARACTERS DIDN'T KILL US ALL!

BY THE TIME A DAKOTA HAD FLOWN THEM BACK TO BASE, THE C.O.'s EYE WAS AS BLACK AS COAL. GRIMLY HE SUFFERED COMMENTS FROM THE OTHERS IN SILENCE.

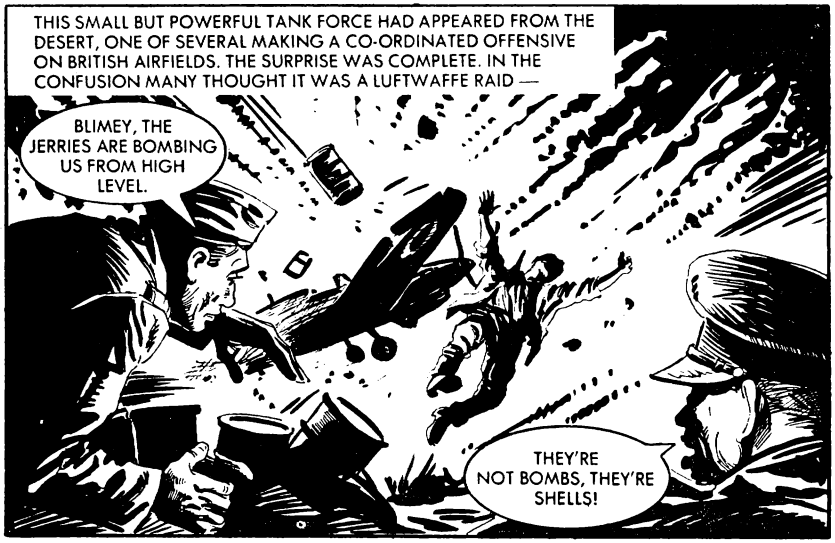
YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE A JOB CONVINCING THE REST OF THE CHAPS THAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN BEATING UP CAIRO, SIR.

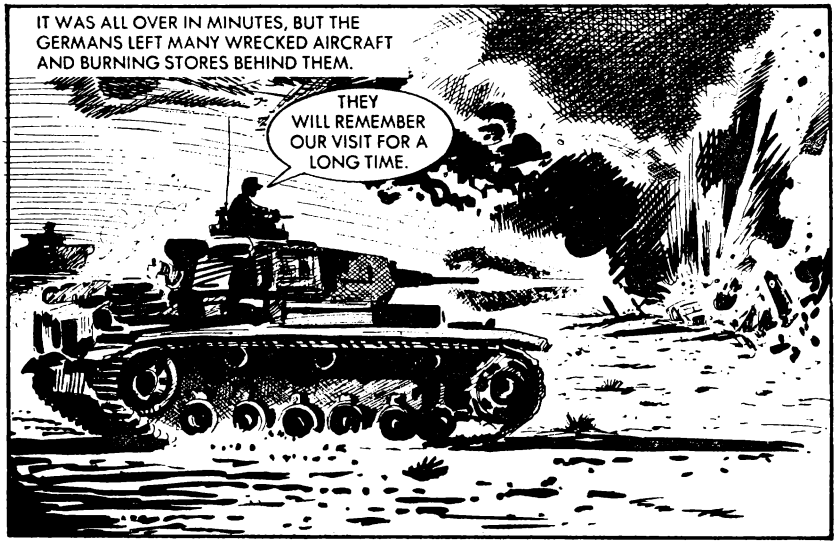
SOMEHOW I DON'T THINK I'M VERY POPULAR JUST NOW.

TO ADD TO THEIR PROBLEMS, TWO DAYS LATER THEY HAD SOME UNWELCOME VISITORS — GERMAN TANKS. THIS WAS PART OF JOACHIM DOERNER'S UNIT, OUT TO CAUSE HAVOC.

IT WILL BE DARK IN HALF-AN-HOUR — WE WILL ATTACK THEN. THAT WILL GIVE US ALL NIGHT TO ESCAPE.

JAWOHL, HERR MAJOR. THE ENGLANDERS ARE IN FOR A SHOCK.

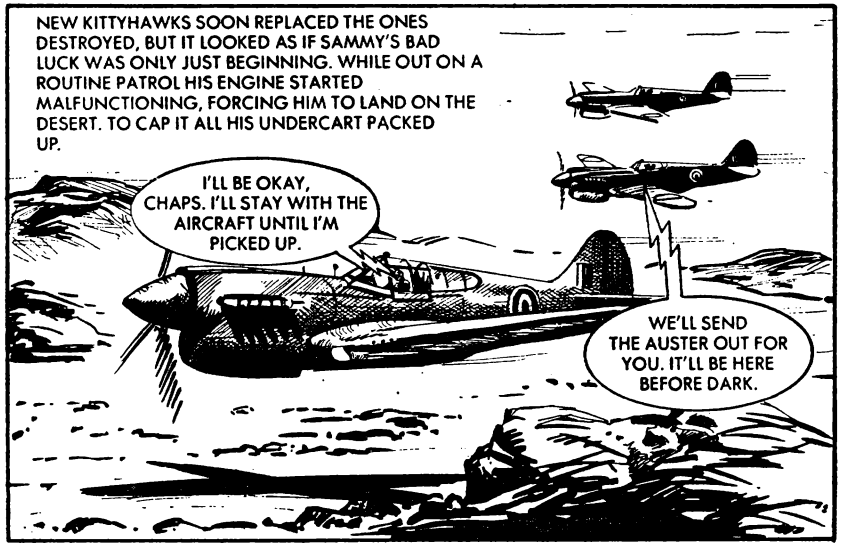

THIS SMALL BUT POWERFUL TANK FORCE HAD APPEARED FROM THE DESERT, ONE OF SEVERAL MAKING A CO-ORDINATED OFFENSIVE ON BRITISH AIRFIELDS. THE SURPRISE WAS COMPLETE. IN THE CONFUSION MANY THOUGHT IT WAS A LUFTWAFFE RAID —
BLIMEY, THE JERRIES ARE BOMBING US FROM HIGH LEVEL.
THEY'RE NOT BOMBS, THEY'RE SHELLS!

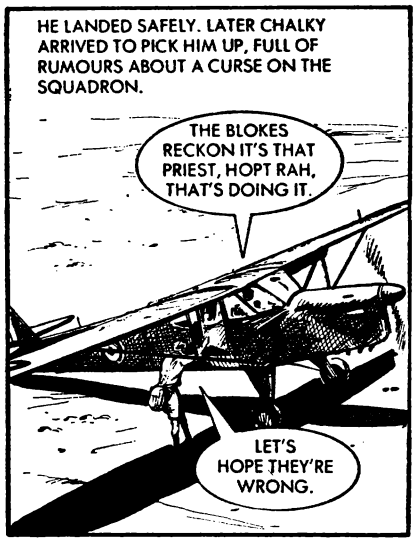

IT WAS ALL OVER IN MINUTES, BUT THE GERMANS LEFT MANY WRECKED AIRCRAFT AND BURNING STORES BEHIND THEM.
THEY WILL REMEMBER OUR VISIT FOR A LONG TIME.

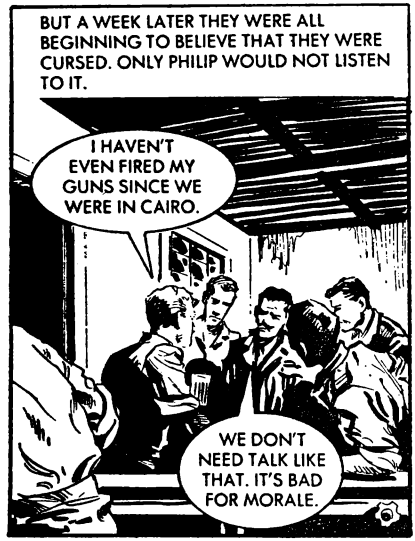
THE ATTACKS HAD BEEN BRILLIANTLY PLANNED. AS A RESULT OF THIS ALL THE ENEMY UNITS ESCAPED INTO THE DESERT WITHOUT A SINGLE CASUALTY. NEXT DAY HIGH-RANKING ALLIED OFFICERS MET TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION — ANY MORE LOSSES LIKE THIS WOULD BE DISASTROUS.

GERMAN PROPAGANDA HAD MADE IT KNOWN THAT ONE OF THEIR MOST ENTERPRISING DESERT LEADERS WAS IN THIS AREA AS A PART OF A BID TO UNSETTLE THE BRITISH. IT SEEMED TO BE WORKING.

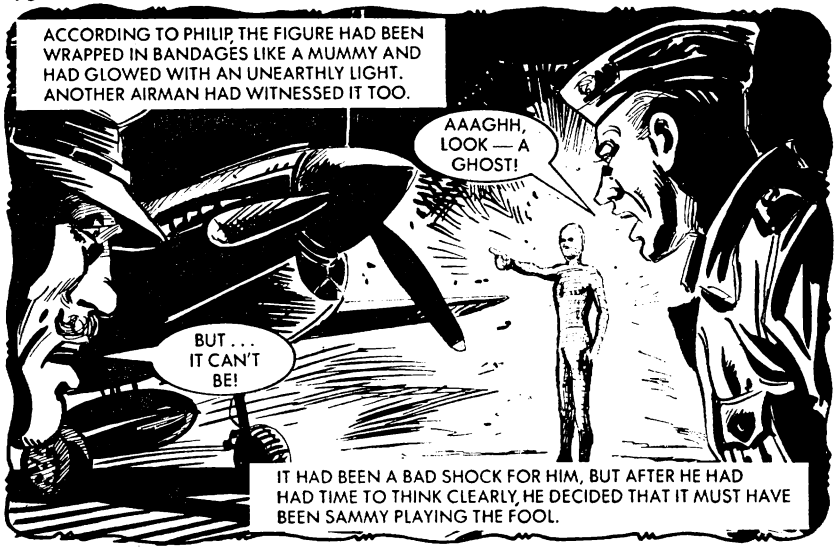
NEW KITTYHAWKS SOON REPLACED THE ONES DESTROYED, BUT IT LOOKED AS IF SAMMY'S BAD LUCK WAS ONLY JUST BEGINNING. WHILE OUT ON A ROUTINE PATROL HIS ENGINE STARTED MALFUNCTIONING, FORCING HIM TO LAND ON THE DESERT. TO CAP IT ALL HIS UNDERCART PACKED UP.




HE LANDED SAFELY. LATER CHALKY ARRIVED TO PICK HIM UP, FULL OF RUMOURS ABOUT A CURSE ON THE SQUADRON.
THE BLOKES RECKON IT'S THAT PRIEST, HOPT RAH, THAT'S DOING IT.
LET'S HOPE THEY'RE WRONG.


BUT A WEEK LATER THEY WERE ALL BEGINNING TO BELIEVE THAT THEY WERE CURSED. ONLY PHILIP WOULD NOT LISTEN TO IT.
I HAVEN'T EVEN FIRED MY GUNS SINCE WE WERE IN CAIRO.
WE DON'T NEED TALK LIKE THAT. IT'S BAD FOR MORALE.

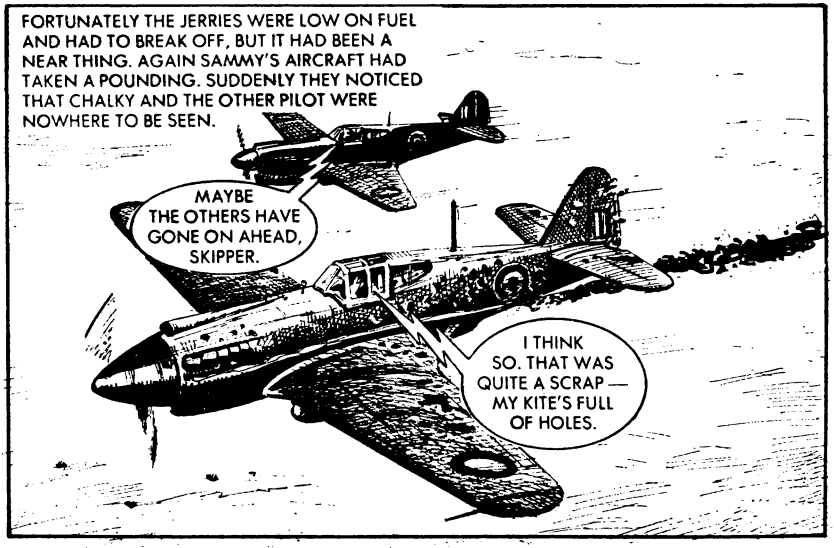
THINGS CAME TO A HEAD ONE NIGHT WHEN THE C.O. SAW A GHOSTLY SHAPE AT DISPERSALS JUST AFTER DARK. HE BURST INTO THE MESS, POINTING AN ACCUSING FINGER AT SAMMY.
IF YOU THINK THAT WAS FUNNY I CAN ASSURE YOU IT WASN'T.
WHAT? I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, SIR. I WENT DOWN TO CHECK MY AIRCRAFT AND JUST GOT BACK.

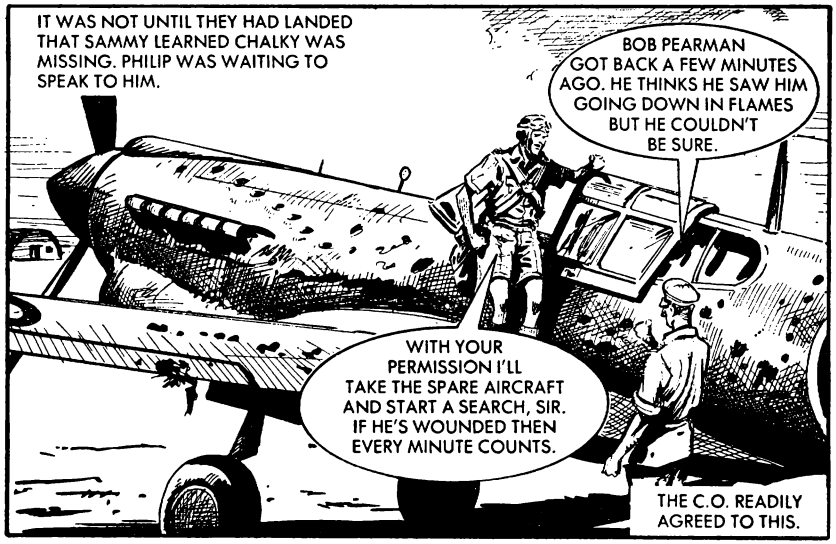

ACCORDING TO PHILIP, THE FIGURE HAD BEEN WRAPPED IN BANDAGES LIKE A MUMMY AND HAD GLOWED WITH AN UNEARTHLY LIGHT. ANOTHER AIRMAN HAD WITNESSED IT TOO.
AAAGHH, LOOK — A GHOST!
BUT . . . IT CAN'T BE!
IT HAD BEEN A BAD SHOCK FOR HIM, BUT AFTER HE HAD HAD TIME TO THINK CLEARLY, HE DECIDED THAT IT MUST HAVE BEEN SAMMY PLAYING THE FOOL.

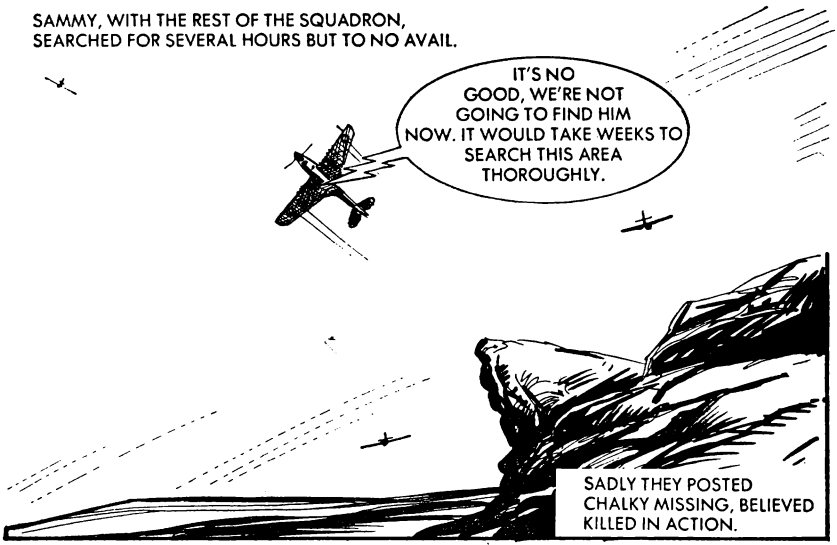
THE MYSTERY FIGURE HAD DISAPPEARED INTO THE DARKNESS, BUT NOT EVERYONE WAS PREPARED TO BELIEVE IT WAS A PRACTICAL JOKER.
THERE'S SOMETHING ODD GOING ON.
IT SERVES YOU RIGHT. YOU DISTURBED THE SPIRITS AND NOW THEY'RE PAYING YOU BACK!

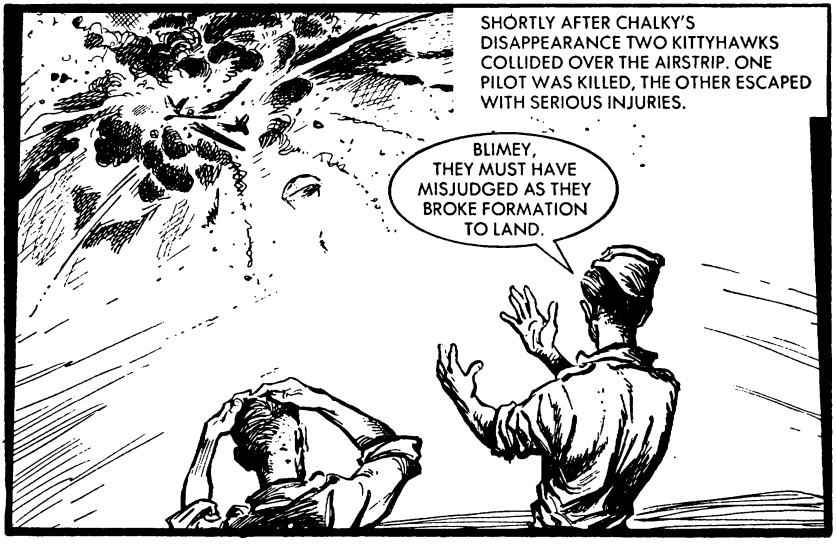
ON DAWN PATROL WITH CHALKY AND TWO COMPANIONS, SAMMY COULDN'T HELP BUT PUZZLE OVER THE INCIDENT.
THE OLD MAN ISN'T THE TYPE TO PLAY THE FOOL, SO WHAT DID HE SEE?

HALF AN HOUR LATER, HIGH ABOVE THE DESERT, THE PATROL WAS JUMPED BY A SUPERIOR FORCE OF Me109s. SOON THE BRITISH WERE FIGHTING FOR THEIR LIVES.
CAN'T SHAKE HIM OFF — AND I CAN'T SEE ANY OF THE OTHERS. ALL I CAN DO IS DODGE AND HOPE IT SPOILS HIS AIM.


FORTUNATELY THE JERRIES WERE LOW ON FUEL AND HAD TO BREAK OFF, BUT IT HAD BEEN A NEAR THING. AGAIN SAMMY'S AIRCRAFT HAD TAKEN A POUNDING. SUDDENLY THEY NOTICED THAT CHALKY AND THE OTHER PILOT WERE NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.
MAYBE THE OTHERS HAVE GONE ON AHEAD, SKIPPER.
I THINK SO. THAT WAS QUITE A SCRAP — MY KITE'S FULL OF HOLES.

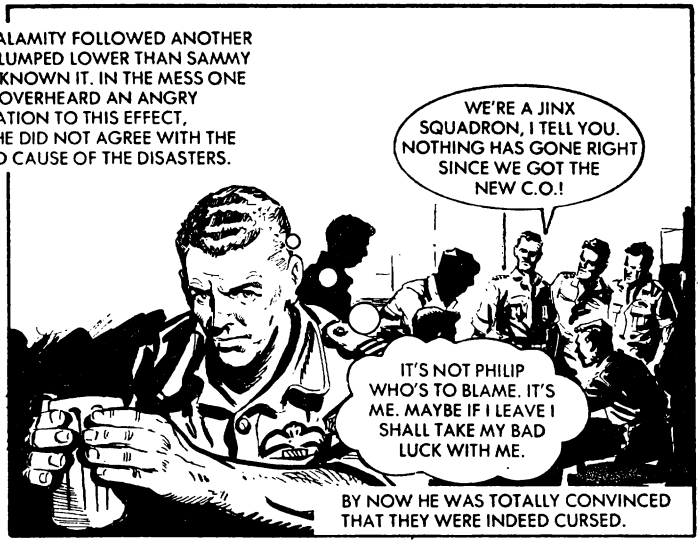

IT WAS NOT UNTIL THEY HAD LANDED THAT SAMMY LEARNED CHALKY WAS MISSING. PHILIP WAS WAITING TO SPEAK TO HIM.
BOB PEARMAN GOT BACK A FEW MINUTES AGO. HE THINKS HE SAW HIM GOING DOWN IN FLAMES BUT HE COULDN'T BE SURE.
WITH YOUR PERMISSION I'LL TAKE THE SPARE AIRCRAFT AND START A SEARCH, SIR. IF HE'S WOUNDED THEN EVERY MINUTE COUNTS.
THE C.O. READILY AGREED TO THIS.


SAMMY, WITH THE REST OF THE SQUADRON, SEARCHED FOR SEVERAL HOURS BUT TO NO AVAIL.
IT'S NO GOOD, WE'RE NOT GOING TO FIND HIM NOW. IT WOULD TAKE WEEKS TO SEARCH THIS AREA THOROUGHLY.
SADLY THEY POSTED CHALKY MISSING, BELIEVED KILLED IN ACTION.


SHORTLY AFTER CHALKY'S DISAPPEARANCE TWO KITTYHAWKS COLLIDED OVER THE AIRSTRIP. ONE PILOT WAS KILLED, THE OTHER ESCAPED WITH SERIOUS INJURIES.
BLIMEY, THEY MUST HAVE MISJUDGED AS THEY BROKE FORMATION TO LAND.

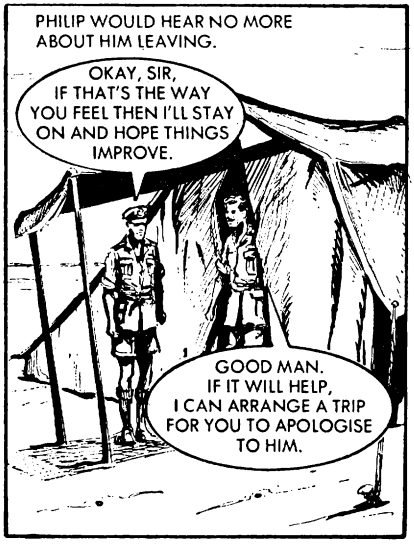
IT WAS MORE FUEL FOR THE RUMOURS OF A PRIESTLY CURSE, BY NOW EVERYONE WAS BEGINNING TO HAVE DOUBTS. SOME WERE TOTALLY CONVINCED THE UNIT DEFINITELY HAD A HOODOO ON IT.
HOPT RAH STRIKES AGAIN, SAMMY. I'M BEGINNING TO FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE EVERY TIME I GET INTO MY COCKPIT.
MAYBE IT REALLY DOES EXIST. IF THERE IS THEN IT'S ALL MY FAULT. THERE MUST BE SOME WAY TO PUT THINGS RIGHT.

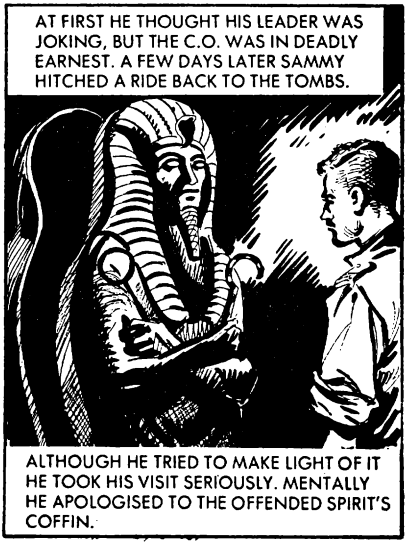
AS ONE CALAMITY FOLLOWED ANOTHER MORALE SLUMPED LOWER THAN SAMMY HAD EVER KNOWN IT. IN THE MESS ONE NIGHT HE OVERHEARD AN ANGRY CONVERSATION TO THIS EFFECT, THOUGH HE DID NOT AGREE WITH THE SUSPECTED CAUSE OF THE DISASTERS.



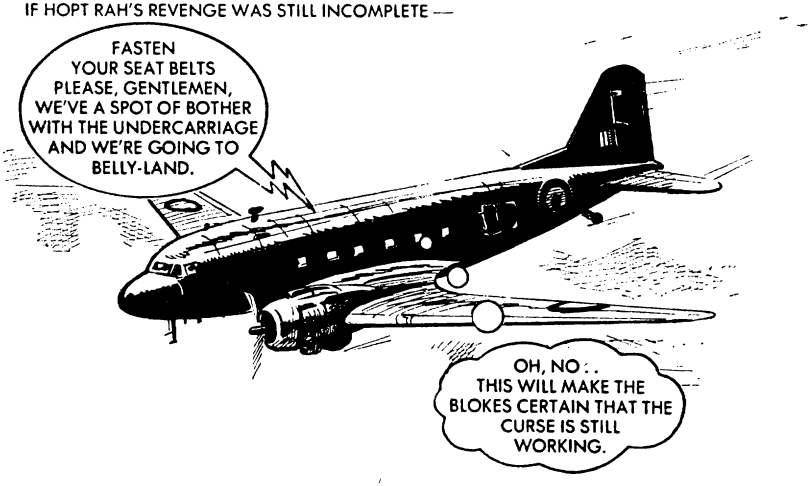
BY NOW HE WAS TOTALLY CONVINCED THAT THEY WERE INDEED CURSED.

THE VERY NEXT DAY HE WENT TO SEE PHILIP AND OFFERED TO APPLY FOR A TRANSFER. HE EXPECTED HIM TO AGREE ENTHUSIASTICALLY, BUT HE WAS WRONG.



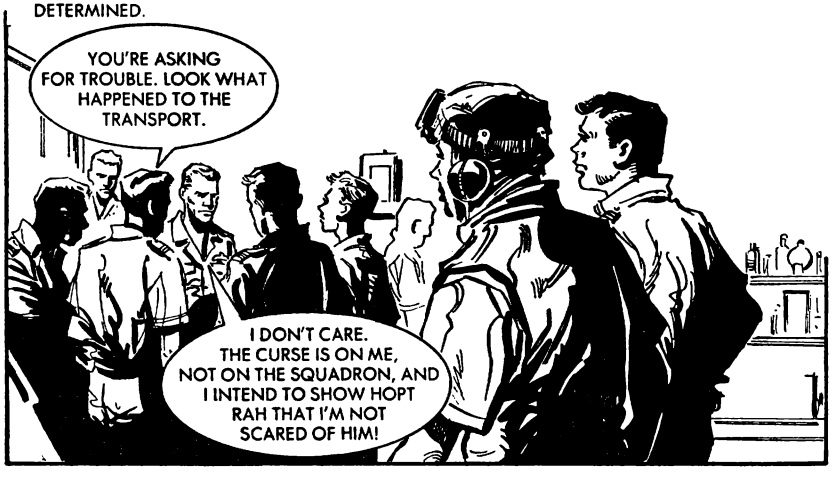


ON THE FLIGHT BACK TO BASE HE HAD TO ADMIT THAT HE FELT BETTER, BUT AS THEY NEARED THE AIRSTRIP IT LOOKED AS IF HOPT RAH'S REVENGE WAS STILL INCOMPLETE —

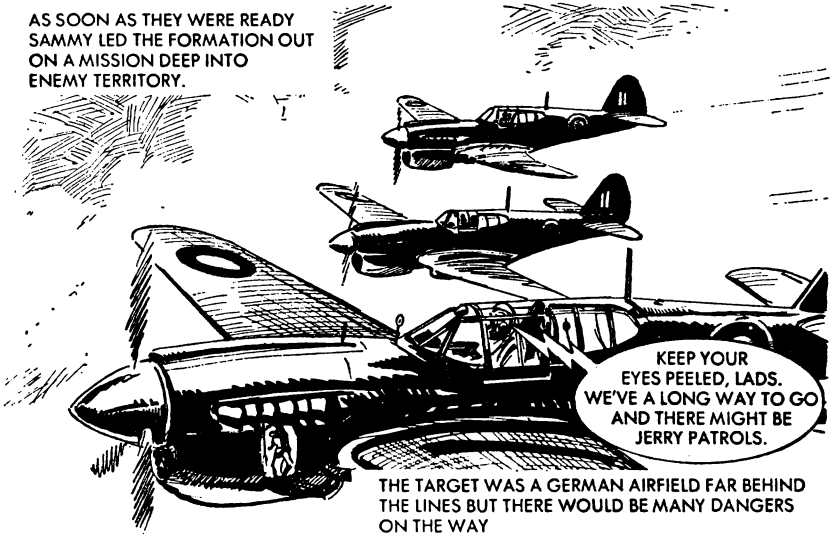


FORTUNATELY NOBODY WAS HURT IN THE CRASH BUT FOR SAMMY IT WAS THE LAST STRAW. SILENTLY HE SWORE DEFIANCE OF THE SPIRIT.

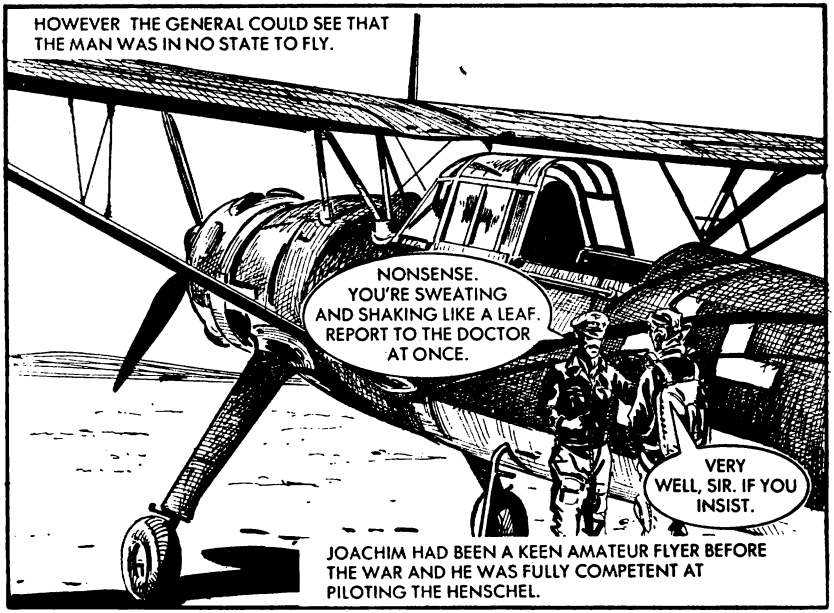
THAT EVENING IN THE MESS, HE MADE IT KNOWN THAT THIS TIME IT WAS GOING TO BE A FIGHT TO THE FINISH. MOST OF THE OTHERS WERE CLEARLY WORRIED BY THIS BUT HE WAS DETERMINED.

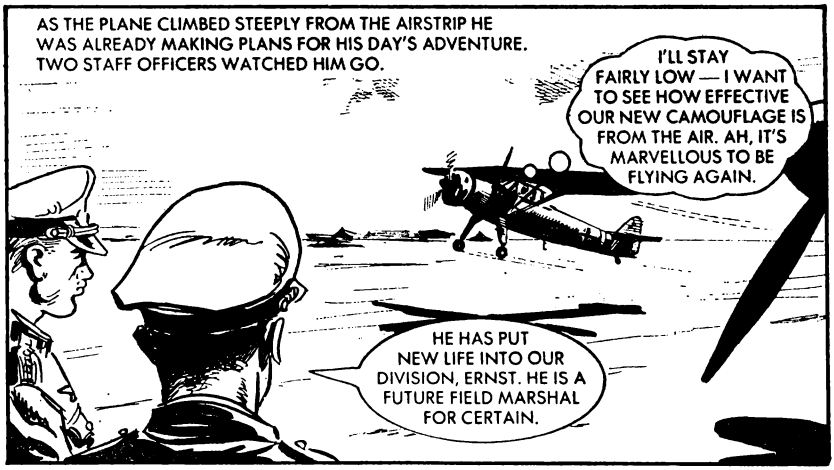


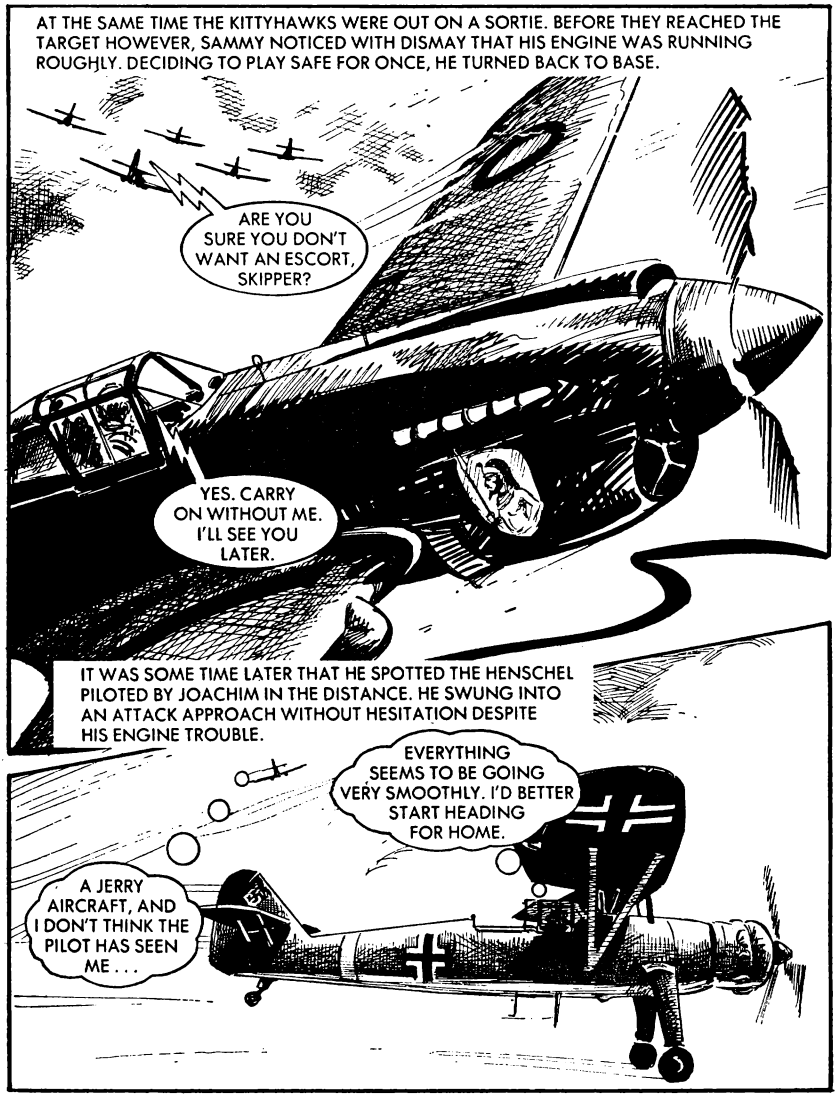
HE WAS DUE TO FLY A DAWN MISSION WITH HIS FLIGHT, BUT HE SAT UP LATE EXPRESSING HIS CONTEMPT FOR THE CURSE WITH A PAINT-BRUSH. BY MORNING HE HAD FINISHED. WHEN THE OTHERS ARRIVED THEY LOOKED ON INCREDULOUSLY.
BLIMEY, A FLYING PHAROAH! HOPT RAH SHOULD BE PLEASED.
HE CAN LIKE IT OR LUMP IT, MATE, BUT FROM NOW ON HE'S GOING TO BE MY MASCOT.

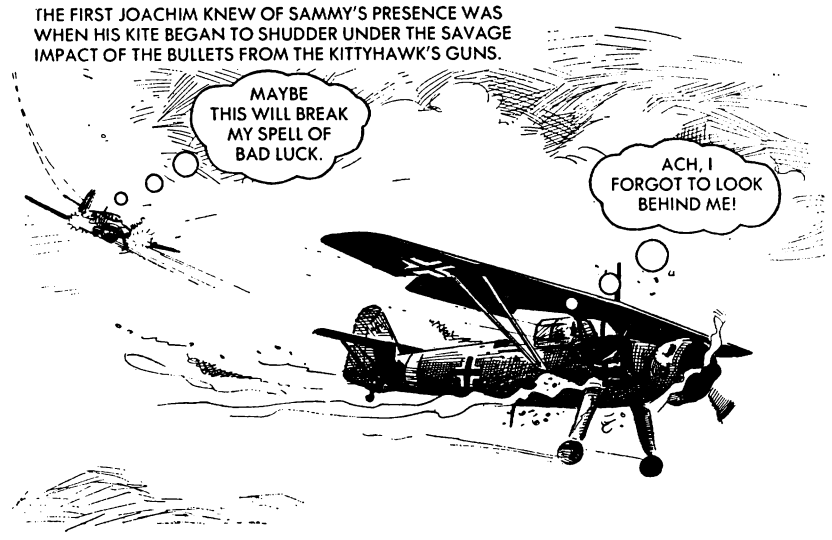

AS SOON AS THEY WERE READY SAMMY LED THE FORMATION OUT ON A MISSION DEEP INTO ENEMY TERRITORY.
KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED, LADS. WE'VE A LONG WAY TO GO AND THERE MIGHT BE JERRY PATROLS.
THE TARGET WAS A GERMAN AIRFIELD FAR BEHIND THE LINES BUT THERE WOULD BE MANY DANGERS ON THE WAY

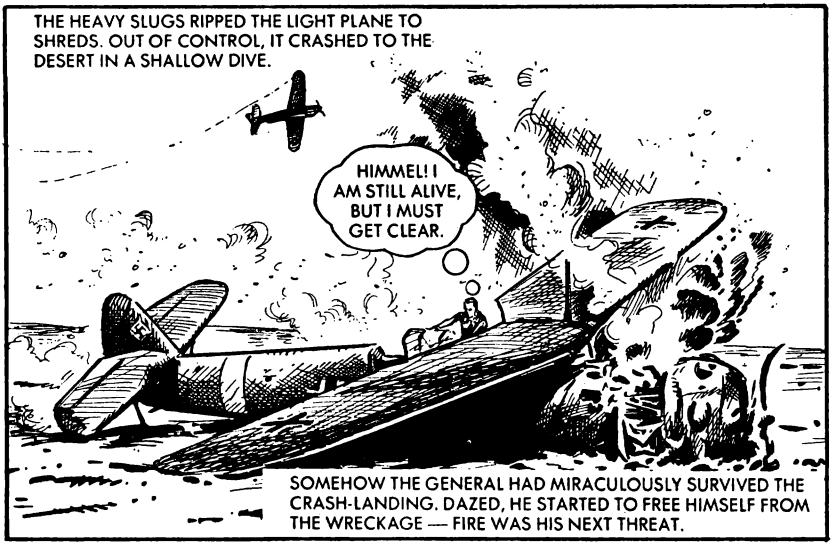
AT HIS OWN BASE, GENERAL JOACHIM DOERNER WAS ALSO UP EARLY, FOR HE HAD PLANNED AN INSPECTION OF SOME OF THE OUTLYING UNITS OF HIS DIVISION.
YOUR CAR AND ESCORT IS WAITING, HERR GENERAL. SHALL I NOTIFY THE UNITS INVOLVED?
NEIN, I'LL SURPRISE THEM. I SHAN'T NEED THE CAR EITHER, I'LL USE THE HENSCHEL. I CAN COVER MORE GROUND THAT WAY.
OUT ON THE RUNWAY, AFTER PULLING ON THE OLD, WELL-WORN FLYING JACKET HE ALWAYS USED, HE NOTICED THAT THE PILOT APPOINTED TO HIM SEEMED UNFIT FOR DUTY.
YOU DON'T LOOK AT ALL WELL, KARL. YOU SHOULD REPORT SICK.
I SHALL BE ALL RIGHT ONCE WE'RE AIRBORNE. A TOUCH OF FEVER, THAT'S ALL.


HOWEVER THE GENERAL COULD SEE THAT THE MAN WAS IN NO STATE TO FLY.
NONSENSE. YOU'RE SWEATING AND SHAKING LIKE A LEAF. REPORT TO THE DOCTOR AT ONCE.
VERY WELL, SIR. IF YOU INSIST.
JOACHIM HAD BEEN A KEEN AMATEUR FLYER BEFORE THE WAR AND HE WAS FULLY COMPETENT AT PILOTING THE HENSCHEL.

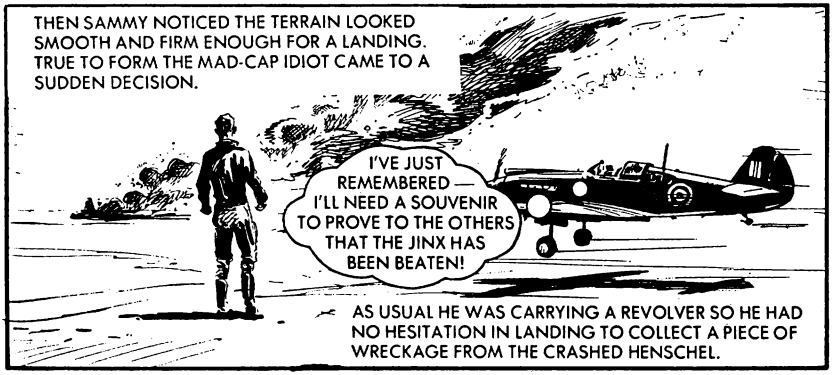

AS THE PLANE CLIMBED STEEPLY FROM THE AIRSTRIP HE WAS ALREADY MAKING PLANS FOR HIS DAY'S ADVENTURE. TWO STAFF OFFICERS WATCHED HIM GO.
I'LL STAY FAIRLY LOW — I WANT TO SEE HOW EFFECTIVE OUR NEW CAMOUFLAGE IS FROM THE AIR. AH, IT'S MARVELLOUS TO BE FLYING AGAIN.
HE HAS PUT NEW LIFE INTO OUR DIVISION, ERNST. HE IS A FUTURE FIELD MARSHAL FOR CERTAIN.

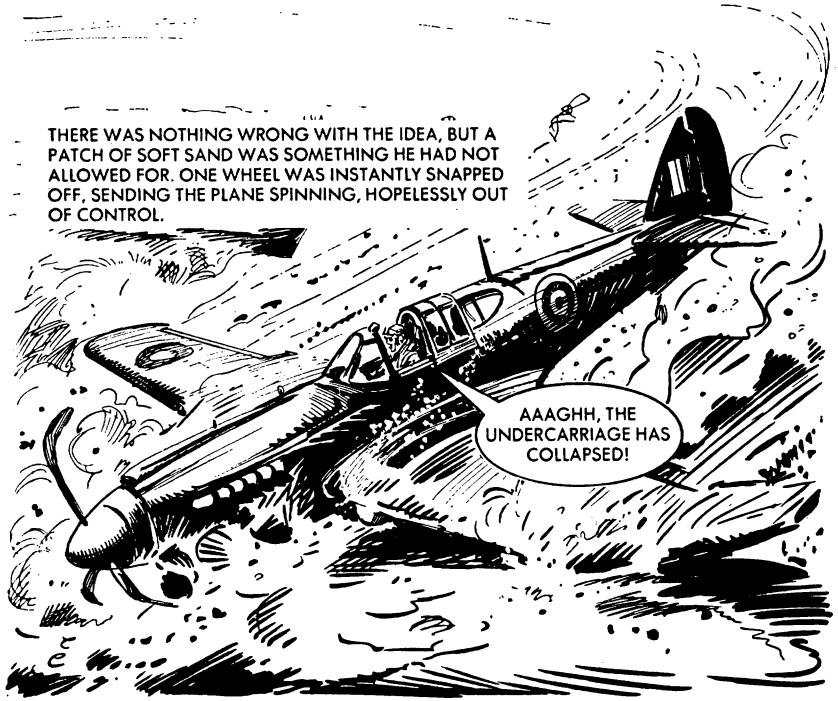

AT THE SAME TIME THE KITTYHAWKS WERE OUT ON A SORTIE. BEFORE THEY REACHED THE TARGET HOWEVER, SAMMY NOTICED WITH DISMAY THAT HIS ENGINE WAS RUNNING ROUGHLY. DECIDING TO PLAY SAFE FOR ONCE, HE TURNED BACK TO BASE.
ARE YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT AN ESCORT, SKIPPER?
YES. CARRY ON WITHOUT ME. I'LL SEE YOU LATER.
IT WAS SOME TIME LATER THAT HE SPOTTED THE HENSCHEL PILOTED BY JOACHIM IN THE DISTANCE. HE SWUNG INTO AN ATTACK APPROACH WITHOUT HESITATION DESPITE HIS ENGINE TROUBLE.
EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE GOING VERY SMOOTHLY. I'D BETTER START HEADING FOR HOME.
A JERRY AIRCRAFT, AND I DON'T THINK THE PILOT HAS SEEN ME . . .


THE FIRST JOACHIM KNEW OF SAMMY'S PRESENCE WAS WHEN HIS KITE BEGAN TO SHUDDER UNDER THE SAVAGE IMPACT OF THE BULLETS FROM THE KITTYHAWK'S GUNS.
MAYBE THIS WILL BREAK MY SPELL OF BAD LUCK.
ACH, I FORGOT TO LOOK BEHIND ME!

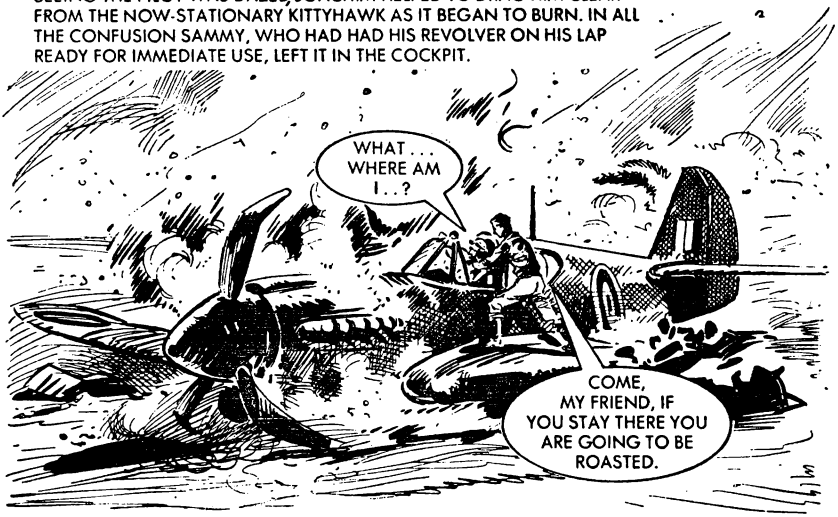

THE HEAVY SLUGS RIPPED THE LIGHT PLANE TO SHREDS. OUT OF CONTROL, IT CRASHED TO THE DESERT IN A SHALLOW DIVE.
HIMMEL! I AM STILL ALIVE, BUT I MUST GET CLEAR.
SOMEHOW THE GENERAL HAD MIRACULOUSLY SURVIVED THE CRASH-LANDING. DAZED, HE STARTED TO FREE HIMSELF FROM THE WRECKAGE — FIRE WAS HIS NEXT THREAT.

PROTECTING HIS FACE WITH ONE ARM HE STAGGERED CLEAR AS THE FUEL TANKS EXPLODED. HE HAD GOT AWAY IN THE NICK OF TIME.
AAAGH ...THE HEAT!
BANKING STEEPLY OVER THE SCENE, SAMMY SAW THE SOLITARY SURVIVOR AND FELT A TWINGE OF PITY.
POOR DEVIL, HE WON'T LAST MORE THAN A FEW HOURS WITHOUT WATER. I'LL DROP HIM MY EMERGENCY RATIONS. I WON'T NEED THEM.


THEN SAMMY NOTICED THE TERRAIN LOOKED SMOOTH AND FIRM ENOUGH FOR A LANDING. TRUE TO FORM THE MAD-CAP IDIOT CAME TO A SUDDEN DECISION.
I'VE JUST REMEMBERED — I'LL NEED A SOUVENIR TO PROVE TO THE OTHERS THAT THE JINX HAS BEEN BEATEN!
AS USUAL HE WAS CARRYING A REVOLVER SO HE HAD NO HESITATION IN LANDING TO COLLECT A PIECE OF WRECKAGE FROM THE CRASHED HENSCHEL.


THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH THE IDEA, BUT A PATCH OF SOFT SAND WAS SOMETHING HE HAD NOT ALLOWED FOR. ONE WHEEL WAS INSTANTLY SNAPPED OFF, SENDING THE PLANE SPINNING, HOPELESSLY OUT OF CONTROL.
AAAGHH, THE UNDERCARRIAGE HAS COLLAPSED!

SEEING THE PILOT WAS DAZED, JOACHIM HELPED TO DRAG HIM CLEAR FROM THE NOW-STATIONARY KITTYHAWK AS IT BEGAN TO BURN. IN ALL THE CONFUSION SAMMY, WHO HAD HAD HIS REVOLVER ON HIS LAP READY FOR IMMEDIATE USE, LEFT IT IN THE COCKPIT.



THE DISTANT DRONE OF AN AIRCRAFT CAUSED JOACHIM TO DIVERT HIS ATTENTION, GIVING SAMMY THE CHANCE HE NEEDED.
IT'S A GERMAN PLANE. IF HE SEES THE SMOKE IT WILL SAVE US A LOT OF WALKING.
I MUST GET THAT PISTOL. IT'S NOW OR NEVER.
LASHING OUT HE KICKED THE GERMAN'S LEGS FROM BENEATH HIM.
HIMMEL!
CAN'T HAVE YOU WAVING TO YOUR MATES, CAN WE?

JOACHIM WAS OLDER YET HE WAS FIT — NO MEAN OPPONENT EVEN WITHOUT A WEAPON.
NOT SO FAST, ENGLANDER. I'VE NO INTENTION OF ENDING THE WAR AS A PRISONER.
WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT . . . AAAGHH!
FOR A FEW SECONDS THE TWO MEN EXCHANGED FURIOUS BLOWS UNTIL A LIGHTNING PUNCH CAUGHT THE GERMAN COMPLETELY OFF GUARD.
UUURGH!
THAT SHOULD KEEP YOU QUIET!
WITH BARELY A GROAN, THE GENERAL SANK TO THE SAND, UNCONSCIOUS. SAMMY, BECAUSE ALL THE PRISONER'S RANK BADGES WERE COVERED, HAD NO IDEA WHAT A BIG FISH HE HAD NETTED.

THE PILOT OF THE Me109 HAD INDEED SEEN THE SMOKE AND DECIDED TO INVESTIGATE.

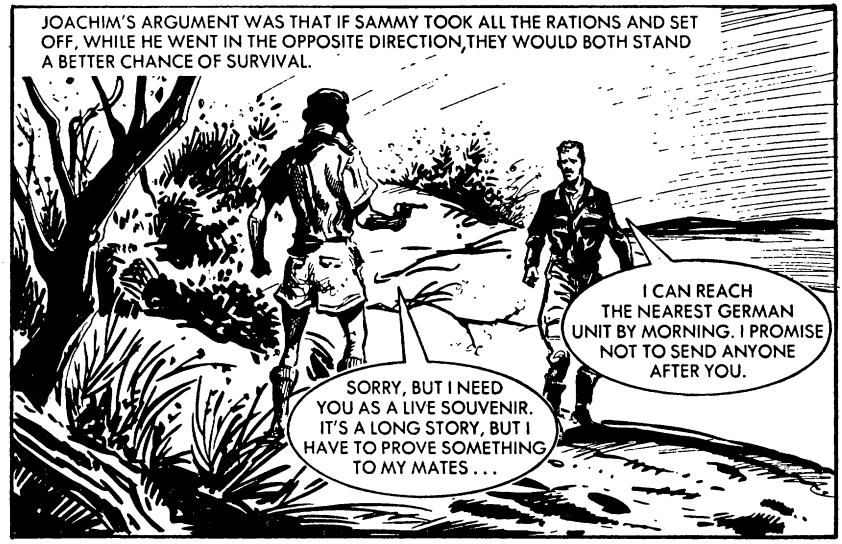
SOMEHOW SAMMY MANAGED TO DRAG THE GERMAN INTO THE LEE OF SOME NEARBY ROCKS, OUT OF SIGHT.

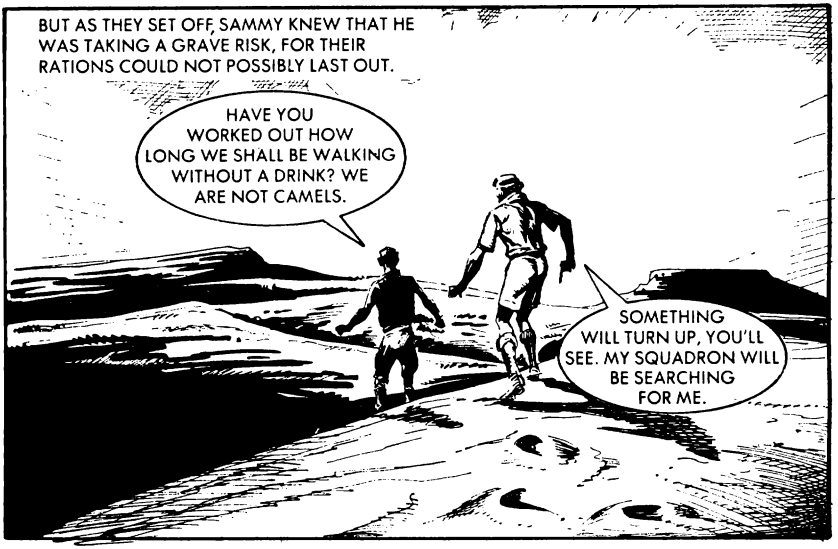
THE ENEMY FIGHTER CIRCLED SEVERAL TIMES, BUT THERE WAS NO SIGN OF LIFE AROUND THE BURNING AIRCRAFT. IN THE SHADE, JOACHIM QUICKLY RECOVERED.

WHEN THE ENEMY PLANE HAD FINALLY DEPARTED, JOACHIM'S HOPES FADED, FOR ALTHOUGH SAMMY SHARED OUT THE RATIONS HE ALSO KEPT A TIGHT GRIP ON THE PISTOL.

IN THE NICK OF TIME THE GENERAL REALISED THAT HIS REAL NAME MIGHT BE WELL KNOWN TO THE BRITISH. IF HIS CAPTOR GOT WIND OF THIS HE WOULD BE MORE VIGILANT, MAKING ESCAPE MUCH HARDER.

JUST NOW, THOUGH, HIS SECRET WAS SAFE.
CHEER UP, MATE, YOU'LL HAVE A GOOD TIME AS A PRISONER. YOU'RE GETTING A BIT PAST IT FOR A PILOT, ANYWAY.
WE CAN'T ALL BE ACES, MY FRIEND. BUT SURELY THERE'S NO NEED FOR US BOTH TO WALK TO THE BRITISH LINES?


JOACHIM'S ARGUMENT WAS THAT IF SAMMY TOOK ALL THE RATIONS AND SET OFF, WHILE HE WENT IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION, THEY WOULD BOTH STAND A BETTER CHANCE OF SURVIVAL.
I CAN REACH THE NEAREST GERMAN UNIT BY MORNING. I PROMISE NOT TO SEND ANYONE AFTER YOU.
SORRY, BUT I NEED YOU AS A LIVE SOUVENIR. IT'S A LONG STORY, BUT I HAVE TO PROVE SOMETHING TO MY MATES . . .


BUT AS THEY SET OFF, SAMMY KNEW THAT HE WAS TAKING A GRAVE RISK, FOR THEIR RATIONS COULD NOT POSSIBLY LAST OUT.
HAVE YOU WORKED OUT HOW LONG WE SHALL BE WALKING WITHOUT A DRINK? WE ARE NOT CAMELS.
SOMETHING WILL TURN UP, YOU'LL SEE. MY SQUADRON WILL BE SEARCHING FOR ME.

IT WAS ALMOST DUSK WHEN FROM SOME HIGH GROUND THEY SPOTTED A GROUP OF VEHICLES IN THE DISTANCE. TO SAMMY'S DESPAIR THEY WERE NOT BRITISH.
JERRY TRUCKS — IT LOOKS AS IF THEY'VE PICKED UP OUR TRACKS. THAT ONE-OH-NINE PILOT MUST HAVE CALLED THEM IN.
SO WHY WASTE OUR ENERGY ANY FURTHER? BY MORNING THEY WILL HAVE CAUGHT UP WITH US.

FOR A MOMENT HE THOUGHT THE GAME WAS UP. HOWEVER, AS IT GREW TOO DARK TO FOLLOW TRACKS, THE SEARCHERS MADE CAMP FOR THE NIGHT. EVEN AS JOACHIM STILL PERSISTED, HIS CAPTOR HAD THOUGHT OF AN ALTERNATIVE TO SURRENDER —

JOACHIM GASPED IN OUTRAGE WHEN SAMMY PRODUCED SOME CORD AND EXPLAINED THAT HE INTENDED TO VISIT THE ENCAMPMENT ALONE.

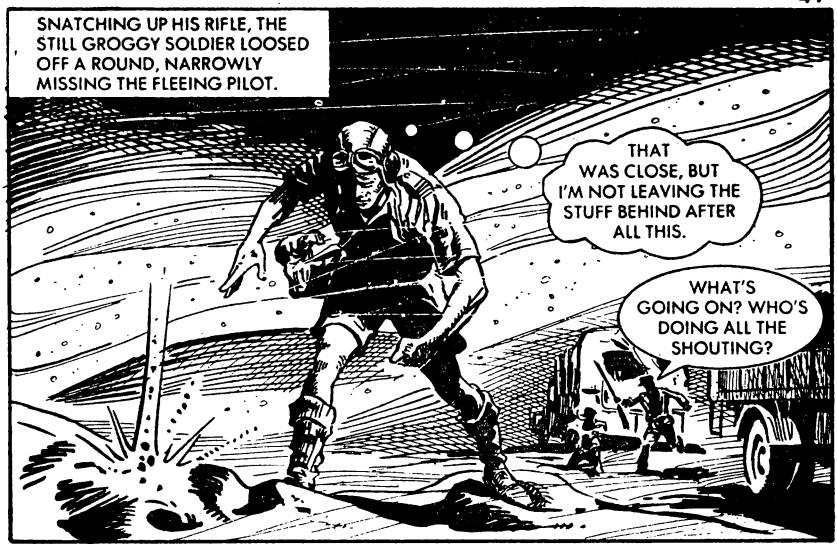
HIS PLAN DEPENDED UPON THE GERMANS NOT EXPECTING VISITORS SO FAR FROM THE BRITISH LINES. EXPERTLY HE TIED JOACHIM UP IN THE LEE OF SOME ROCKS.
IF A SENTRY SEES YOU, AND SHOOTS? WHAT HAPPENS TO ME THEN?
THAT'S A RISK YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO TAKE.
I'LL BE BACK BEFORE DAWN. YOU'LL BE OKAY.
BE CAREFUL THEN . . . FOR BOTH OUR SAKES!
WITH A CHEERFUL GRIN HE STRODE OFF INTO THE DARKNESS.
IT WAS A LONG WALK, BUT AT LAST SAMMY WAS CLOSE ENOUGH TO SEE THE GERMANS ENJOYING THEIR SUPPER.
ACH, THIS WIND. I THINK WE'RE IN FOR A SAND-STORM BEFORE THE NIGHT IS OUT.
LOOKS AS IF I'LL HAVE TO HANG AROUND UNTIL THEY'RE SLEEPING BEFORE I MOVE IN.

IT SEEMED A LONG WAIT BUT AT LAST THEY SETTLED DOWN TO SLEEP, LEAVING ONLY TWO SENTRIES ON WATCH. CAREFULLY HE CREPT INTO THE CAMP.
SO LONG AS I DON'T MAKE A NOISE I SHOULD BE OKAY.

SOON HE WAS ABLE TO FORAGE AROUND UNDISTURBED. IN THE VERY FIRST TRUCK HE SEARCHED HE FOUND SOME RATIONS, A FULL CONTAINER OF WATER AND A SMALL BAG TO CARRY THEM IN.
I THINK I COULD MANAGE TO CARRY A BIT MORE. I'LL TRY OVER THERE.

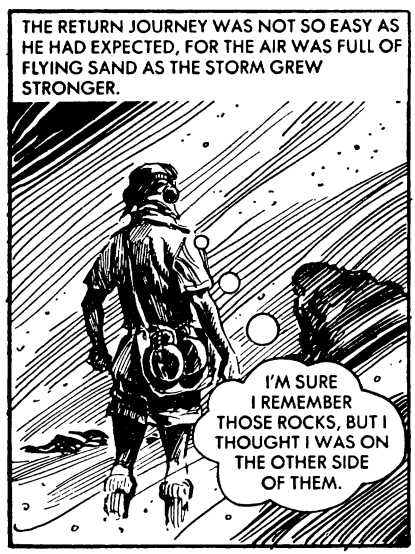
THE PEACE WAS TOO GOOD TO LAST, FOR AS HE RIFLED THROUGH THE SECOND VEHICLE THERE WAS A SHARP CHALLENGE IN GERMAN BEHIND HIM. ONE OF THE SENTRIES HAD MISTAKEN HIM FOR ONE OF HIS OWN UNIT IN THE DIM LIGHT.
HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? STEALING EXTRA GRUB?
BLIMEY, I'VE BEEN SEEN. HE'LL SOON SEE THAT I'M NOT ONE OF HIS OWN BLOKES.
ANY HESITATION WOULD HAVE BEEN FATAL — HE TURNED IMMEDIATELY AND DELIVERED A MIGHTY WALLOP TO THE MAN'S JAW.
YOU'RE NOT GERMAN . . . AAAGHH!
LET'S HOPE THE OTHER ISN'T CLOSE ENOUGH TO HEAR THE ROW.

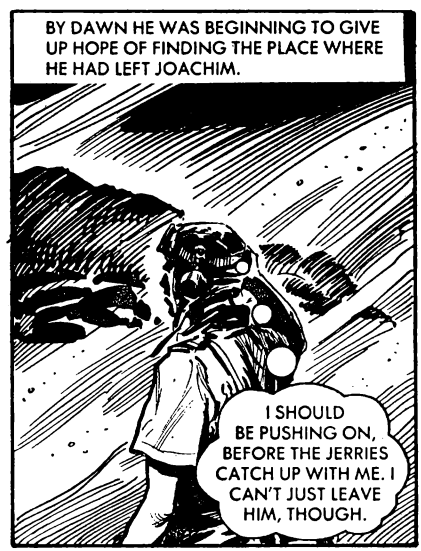
THE SENTRY CRASHED TO THE GROUND, UNCONSCIOUS. SAMMY WAITED BREATHLESSLY FOR SOMEONE TO RAISE THE ALARM, BUT NO ONE STIRRED.
NOT A SOUND, THEY'RE ALL SLEEPING LIKE LOGS. I'LL GRAB ANOTHER WATER CONTAINER BEFORE I GO.
NOW THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO REACH THE BRITISH LINES WITHOUT GOING THIRSTY OR HUNGRY.
THAT'S ENOUGH. I'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE.
SUDDENLY THERE WAS A LOUD GROAN, FOLLOWED BY A SHOUT WHEN THE JERRY SAMMY HAD CLOBBERED RECOVERED HIS SENSES.
OH, MY HEAD. HELP . . . THERE'S AN ENGLANDER IN THE CAMP!
THAT'S DONE IT, HE'LL ROUSE THE WHOLE BUNCH OF 'EM NOW.

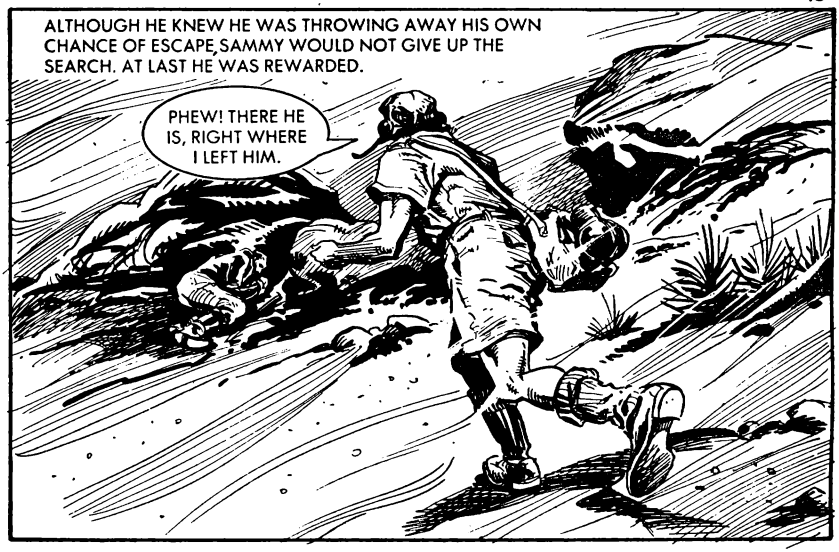

SNATCHING UP HIS RIFLE, THE STILL GROGGY SOLDIER LOOSED OFF A ROUND, NARROWLY MISSING THE FLEEING PILOT.
THAT WAS CLOSE, BUT I'M NOT LEAVING THE STUFF BEHIND AFTER ALL THIS.
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHO'S DOING ALL THE SHOUTING?

GRIMLY HE SPRINTED AWAY, HURDLING A MAN STILL HALF-ASLEEP IN HIS BLANKETS.
STOP HIM! KILL THE SCHWEIN!
HIMMEL!
I THINK I'VE OUTSTAYED MY WELCOME!
FIRED ON BY BOTH SENTRIES AND WITH THE REST THOROUGHLY ALERTED, HE HEADED AT FULL SPEED INTO THE DARKNESS.

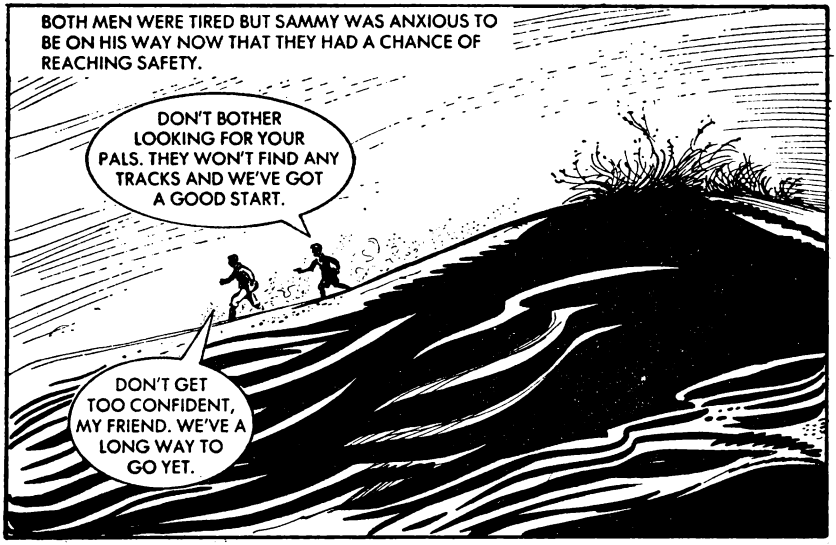
SAMMY KNEW THERE WOULD BE NO IMMEDIATE PURSUIT, AND HE WAS RIGHT.
THEY'LL WAIT UNTIL DAWN TO TRAIL ME, BUT BY THEN IT'LL BE TOO LATE.

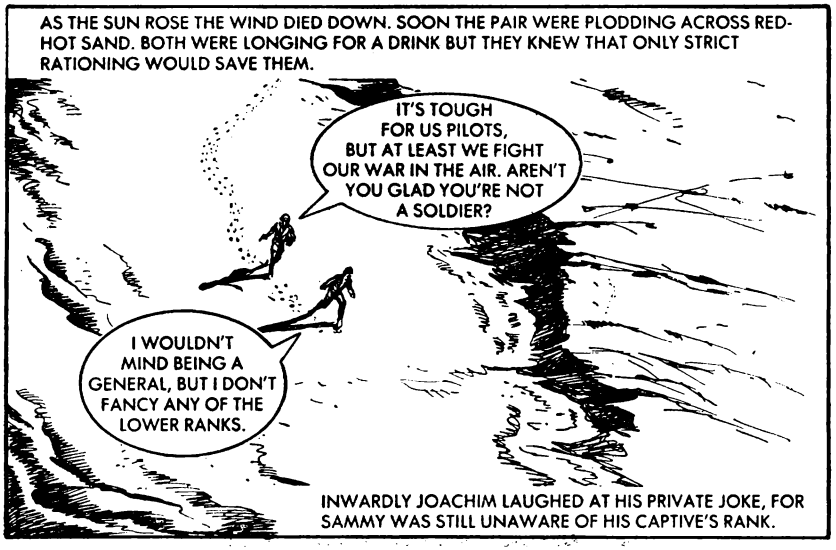

THE RETURN JOURNEY WAS NOT SO EASY AS HE HAD EXPECTED, FOR THE AIR WAS FULL OF FLYING SAND AS THE STORM GREW STRONGER.
I'M SURE I REMEMBER THOSE ROCKS, BUT I THOUGHT I WAS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THEM.

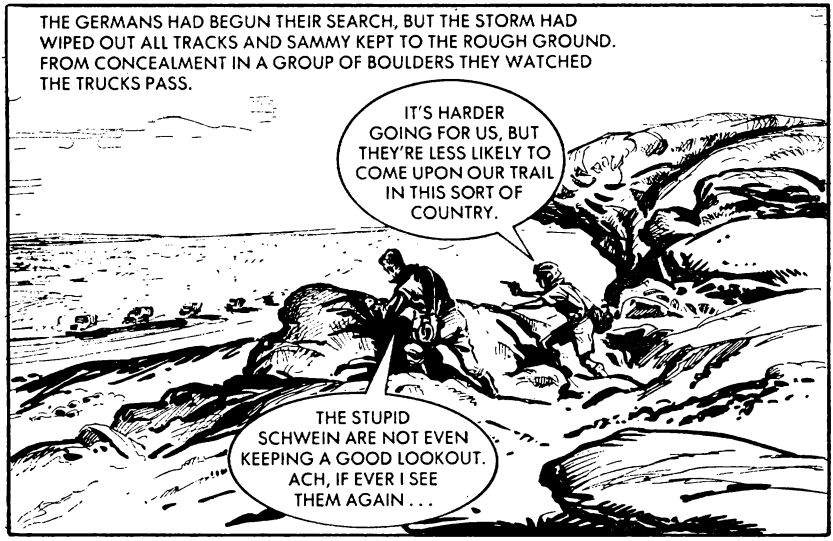

BY DAWN HE WAS BEGINNING TO GIVE UP HOPE OF FINDING THE PLACE WHERE HE HAD LEFT JOACHIM.
I SHOULD BE PUSHING ON, BEFORE THE JERRIES CATCH UP WITH ME. I CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM, THOUGH.

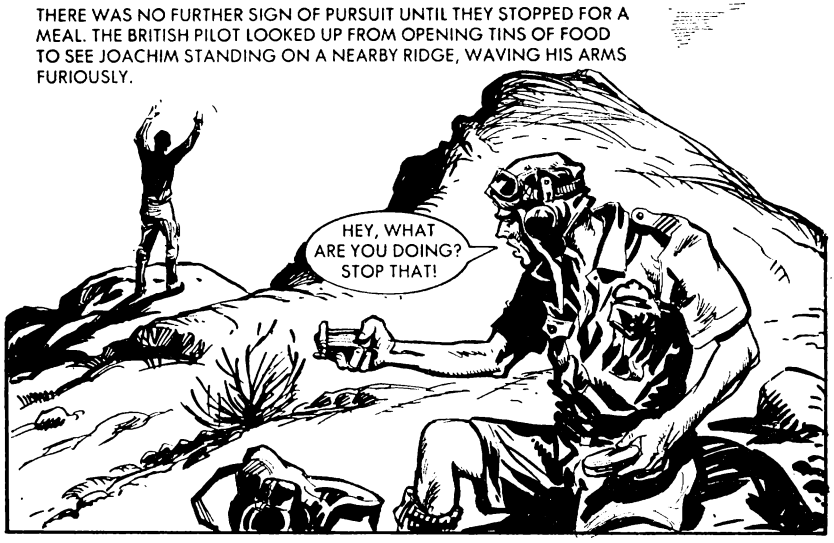

ALTHOUGH HE KNEW HE WAS THROWING AWAY HIS OWN CHANCE OF ESCAPE, SAMMY WOULD NOT GIVE UP THE SEARCH. AT LAST HE WAS REWARDED.
PHEW! THERE HE IS, RIGHT WHERE I LEFT HIM.

JOACHIM LOOKED RELIEVED TO SEE HIM AGAIN, FOR HE HAD ALMOST GIVEN UP HOPE OF RESCUE.
I HAD A SPOT OF BOTHER WITH YOUR MATES AND HAD TO KNOCK ONE OUT.
I'D DECIDED YOU'D EITHER LOST YOUR WAY OR YOU'D BEEN KILLED. WELCOME BACK!

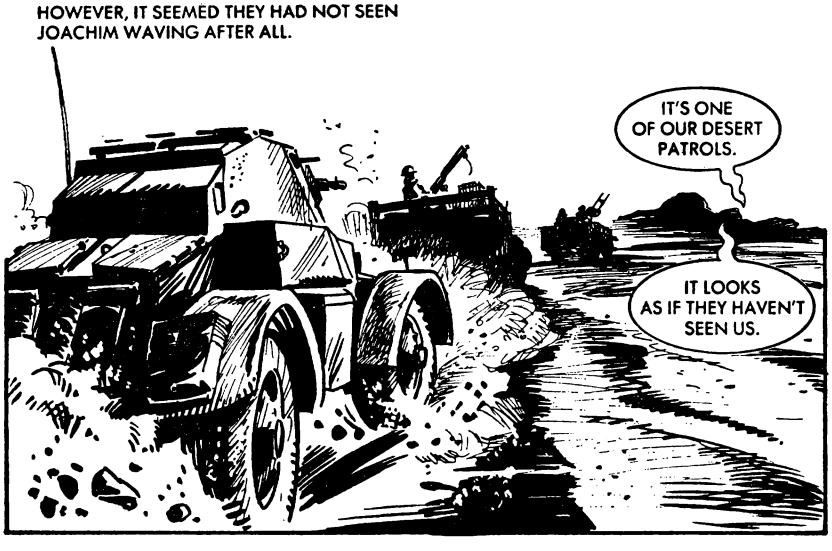

BOTH MEN WERE TIRED BUT SAMMY WAS ANXIOUS TO BE ON HIS WAY NOW THAT THEY HAD A CHANCE OF REACHING SAFETY.
DON'T BOTHER LOOKING FOR YOUR PALS. THEY WON'T FIND ANY TRACKS AND WE'VE GOT A GOOD START.
DON'T GET TOO CONFIDENT, MY FRIEND. WE'VE A LONG WAY TO GO YET.


AS THE SUN ROSE THE WIND DIED DOWN. SOON THE PAIR WERE PLODDING ACROSS RED-HOT SAND. BOTH WERE LONGING FOR A DRINK BUT THEY KNEW THAT ONLY STRICT RATIONING WOULD SAVE THEM.
IT'S TOUGH FOR US PILOTS, BUT AT LEAST WE FIGHT OUR WAR IN THE AIR. AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU'RE NOT A SOLDIER?
I WOULDN'T MIND BEING A GENERAL, BUT I DON'T FANCY ANY OF THE LOWER RANKS.
INWARDLY JOACHIM LAUGHED AT HIS PRIVATE JOKE, FOR SAMMY WAS STILL UNAWARE OF HIS CAPTIVE'S RANK.


THE GERMANS HAD BEGUN THEIR SEARCH, BUT THE STORM HAD WIPED OUT ALL TRACKS AND SAMMY KEPT TO THE ROUGH GROUND. FROM CONCEALMENT IN A GROUP OF BOULDERS THEY WATCHED THE TRUCKS PASS.
IT'S HARDER GOING FOR US, BUT THEY'RE LESS LIKELY TO COME UPON OUR TRAIL IN THIS SORT OF COUNTRY.
THE STUPID SCHWEIN ARE NOT EVEN KEEPING A GOOD LOOKOUT. ACH, IF EVER I SEE THEM AGAIN . . .


THERE WAS NO FURTHER SIGN OF PURSUIT UNTIL THEY STOPPED FOR A MEAL. THE BRITISH PILOT LOOKED UP FROM OPENING TINS OF FOOD TO SEE JOACHIM STANDING ON A NEARBY RIDGE, WAVING HIS ARMS FURIOUSLY.
HEY, WHAT ARE YOU DOING? STOP THAT!

THE GENERAL TRIED TO BREAK AWAY AS SAMMY RUSHED FORWARD AND GRABBED HIM—BUT HIS EFFORTS HAD BEEN WASTED, FOR THE DISTANT UNIT WAS BRITISH.
LET GO OF ME!
SORRY TO DISAPPOINT YOU, BUT YOU'RE SIGNALLING TO MY LOT!


HOWEVER, IT SEEMED THEY HAD NOT SEEN JOACHIM WAVING AFTER ALL.
IT'S ONE OF OUR DESERT PATROLS.
IT LOOKS AS IF THEY HAVEN'T SEEN US.

LUCKILY SAMMY REMEMBERED A DESERT SURVIVAL COURSE HE HAD DONE. REACHING HASTILY FOR HIS POCKET MIRROR, HE USED IT TO REFLECT THE SUN'S RAYS.
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME. THEY WON'T SEE IT AT THIS RANGE.
DON'T FORGET THEY'RE BEHIND ENEMY LINES.
IT LOOKED AS IF JOACHIM WAS RIGHT UNTIL ONE OF THE VEHICLES BROKE AWAY FROM THE REST.
THE ARMOURED CAR APPROACHED CAUTIOUSLY. THEN A CHEERY FACE APPEARED AT ITS HATCH.
WELL, WHAT 'AVE WE GOT 'ERE? THE R.A.F. DOIN' OUR JOB FOR US?
YES, MY MATE JOACHIM WANTS A LIFT TO THE NEAREST PRISON CAMP. I COULD DO WITH A MUG OF TEA INSTEAD!

THE UNIT COMMANDER, MAJOR TERRY WRIGHT, EXPLAINED THAT HE AND HIS MEN WERE ON THEIR WAY HOME AFTER A RAID ON ENEMY SUPPLY DUMPS. SAMMY TOLD HIM HOW HE HAD COME TO BE WANDERING IN THE DESERT WITH A GERMAN AND ALSO ABOUT THE JERRY UNIT PATROLLING THE AREA.

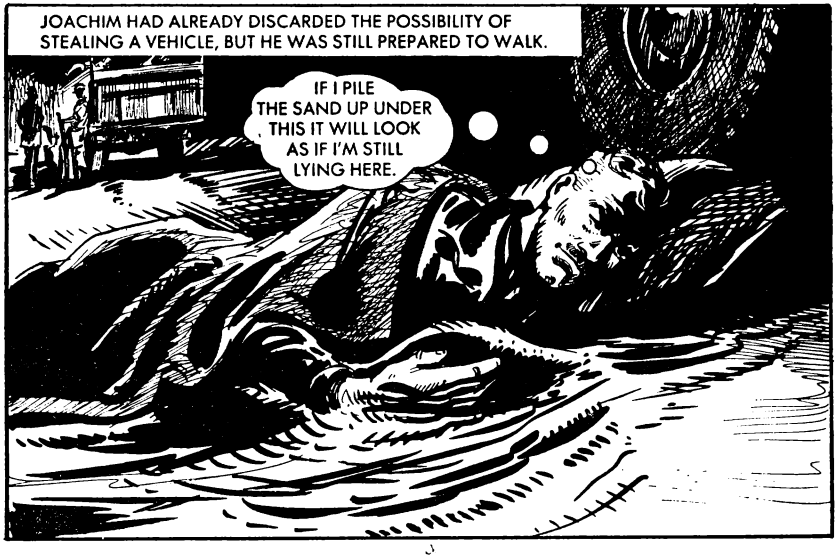
WRIGHT'S ANXIETY WAS EXPLAINED WHEN SAMMY NOTICED THAT ONE OF THE TRUCKS WAS BEING REPAIRED.

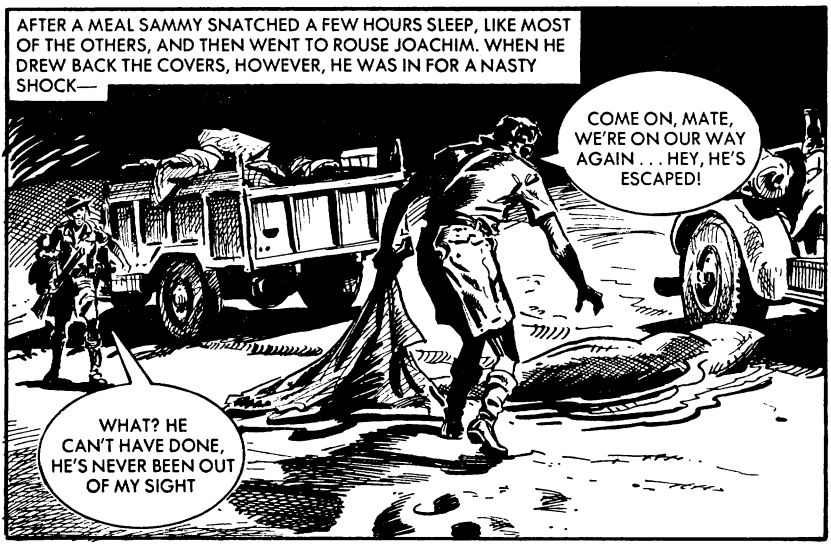
WITH A STRONG ENEMY FORCE AROUND, THE MAJOR'S APPREHENSION WAS UNDERSTANDABLE. AT LAST THE FAULT WAS REMEDIED.

AT DUSK WRIGHT GAVE THE ORDER TO KEEP MOVING. IN THE BACK OF ONE OF THE TRUCKS WITH SOME OF THE SOLDIERS JOACHIM WAS QUIETLY HOPEFUL—
YOUR MAJOR IS IN A HURRY. I THINK HE KNOWS WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF MY LOT HAS FOUND BRITISH TYRE TRACKS . . .
I WOULDN'T START CELEBRATING YET, MATE. IF WE COME UNDER FIRE YOU COULD BE ONE OF THE FIRST TO GET HIT.

IT WAS LONG AFTER DARK BEFORE THEY FINALLY HALTED FOR FOOD AND A FEW HOURS' REST.
ABOUT TIME, TOO. I CAN DO WITH SOME GRUB. WHAT ABOUT YOU, JOACHIM?
NO, I'M NOT HUNGRY. I THINK I'LL GET SOME SLEEP UNTIL WE'RE READY TO MOVE ON AGAIN.

A GUARD HAD BEEN DETAILED, ALTHOUGH NO ONE SERIOUSLY EXPECTED HIM TO TRY TO ESCAPE. HE LAY QUIETLY, WRAPPED IN A BLANKET, PRETENDING TO DOZE WHILE HIS MIND WORKED FURIOUSLY.
I'LL BET THAT JERRY WOULD LIKE TO GET HIS HANDS ON ONE OF OUR TRUCKS, MATE. HE'D SOON BE OFF THEN!
NO CHANCE OF THAT, BERT. HE'D STOP A BULLET BEFORE HE COULD GET THE ENGINE STARTED.


JOACHIM HAD ALREADY DISCARDED THE POSSIBILITY OF STEALING A VEHICLE, BUT HE WAS STILL PREPARED TO WALK.
IF I PILE THE SAND UP UNDER THIS IT WILL LOOK AS IF I'M STILL LYING HERE.

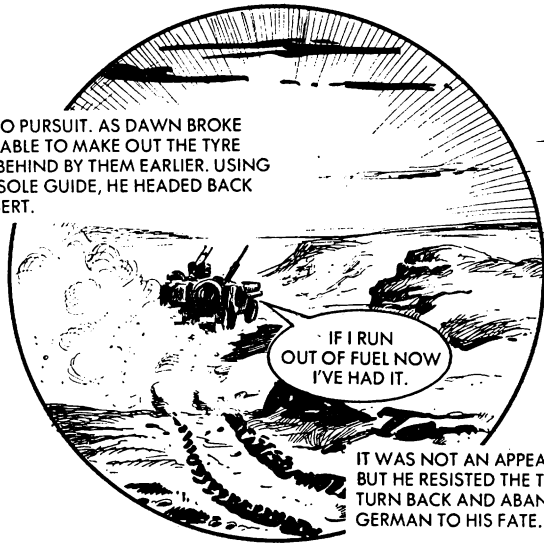

AFTER A MEAL SAMMY SNATCHED A FEW HOURS SLEEP, LIKE MOST OF THE OTHERS, AND THEN WENT TO ROUSE JOACHIM. WHEN HE DREW BACK THE COVERS, HOWEVER, HE WAS IN FOR A NASTY SHOCK—
COME ON, MATE, WE'RE ON OUR WAY AGAIN . . . HEY, HE'S ESCAPED!
WHAT? HE CAN'T HAVE DONE, HE'S NEVER BEEN OUT OF MY SIGHT

THERE WAS NO TELLING HOW LONG A START THE GERMAN HAD GAINED BY HIS TRICK SO THEY HAD TO MOVE OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IN CASE HE ENCOUNTERED THE JERRY PATROL, AND TOLD THEM OF THE BRITISH UNIT'S WEAKNESSES.
HE COULD HAVE SLIPPED AWAY SOON AFTER WE STOPPED.
CAN'T YOU SEND A TRUCK TO LOOK FOR HIM?

BUT WRIGHT CURTLY REFUSED TO MAKE A SEARCH FOR THE ESCAPED PRISONER.
I'M NOT RISKING THE SECURITY OF MY PATROL FOR A JERRY.
ANOTHER VICTORY FOR HOPT RAH. JUST WHEN I WAS THINKING I'D BEATEN THE CURSE, TOO.

SOMEWHERE OUT IN THE DESERT JOACHIM WAS STRIDING OFF TO FREEDOM—OR DEATH IF HE FAILED TO CONTACT THE GERMAN FORCE . . .
. . . AND WITH HIM ARE GOING MY CHANCES OF PROVING THAT THE JINX CAN BE DEFEATED.
THE MAJOR WAS RIGHT NOT TO HAZARD HIS PATROL, BUT SAMMY WAS EQUALLY DETERMINED NOT TO GIVE UP.

NOBODY PAID ANY ATTENTION AS HE SLIPPED CASUALLY INTO THE DRIVING SEAT OF THE JEEP UNTIL HE STARTED THE ENGINE. STARTLED, THE OTHERS WATCHED AS HE ROARED AWAY, IGNORING THEIR SHOUTS.
HEY, WHAT THE BLAZES? STOP THAT MAN!
IT'LL BE LIGHT SOON. IF JOACHIM IS BACK-TRACKING ALONG OUR WHEEL MARKS I SHALL FIND HIM.
COME BACK HERE WITH THAT JEEP!



THERE WAS NO PURSUIT. AS DAWN BROKE SAMMY WAS ABLE TO MAKE OUT THE TYRE TRACKS LEFT BEHIND BY THEM EARLIER. USING THEM AS HIS SOLE GUIDE, HE HEADED BACK INTO THE DESERT.

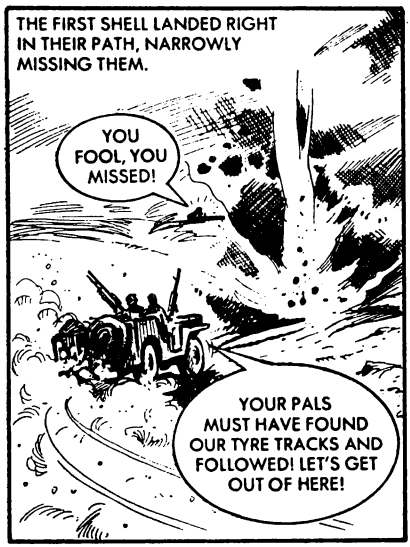
IT WAS NOT AN APPEALING PROSPECT BUT HE RESISTED THE TEMPTATION TO TURN BACK AND ABANDON THE GERMAN TO HIS FATE.

A WHILE LATER, IN THE DISTANCE, HE SAW A FIGURE PLODDING SLOWLY ALONG THROUGH THE LOOSE SAND— IT WAS JOACHIM.

BY THE TIME JOACHIM HEARD THE JEEP, THERE WAS NO TIME TO ESCAPE — NOT THAT THERE WAS ANYWHERE TO RUN TO ANYWAY. WITH A WEARY GRIN HE CLIMBED INTO THE VEHICLE AT THE POINT OF HIS OWN LUGER.

WHEN HE LEARNED THAT SAMMY HAD TAKEN THE JEEP WITHOUT PERMISSION HE WAS BOTH AMAZED AND GRATEFUL. THIS TIME THE BRITISH PILOT INTENDED TO TAKE NO CHANCES, HOWEVER—

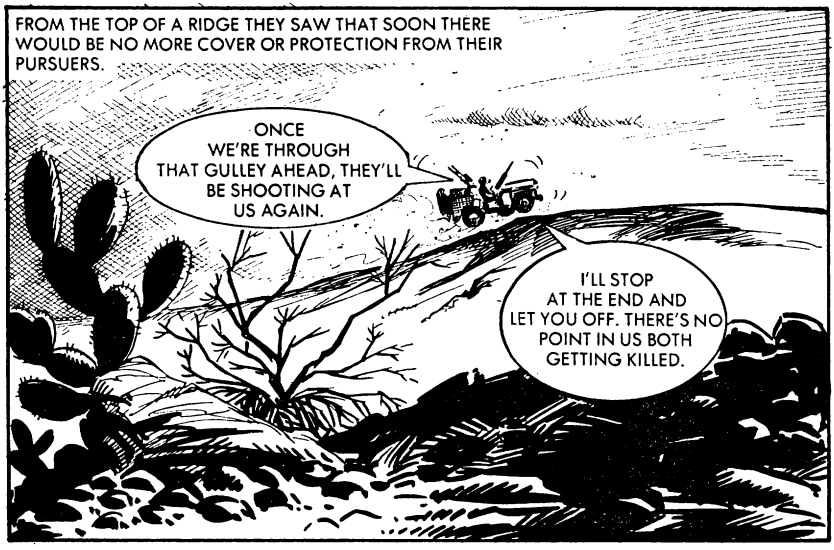
BUT EVEN AS THEY TALKED, A NEW DANGER WAS THREATENING FOR THE GERMAN PATROL, NOW TEAMED UP WITH A COUPLE OF ARMOURED CARS, WAS NOT FAR BEHIND.
ENEMY JEEP AHEAD. HIT IT!

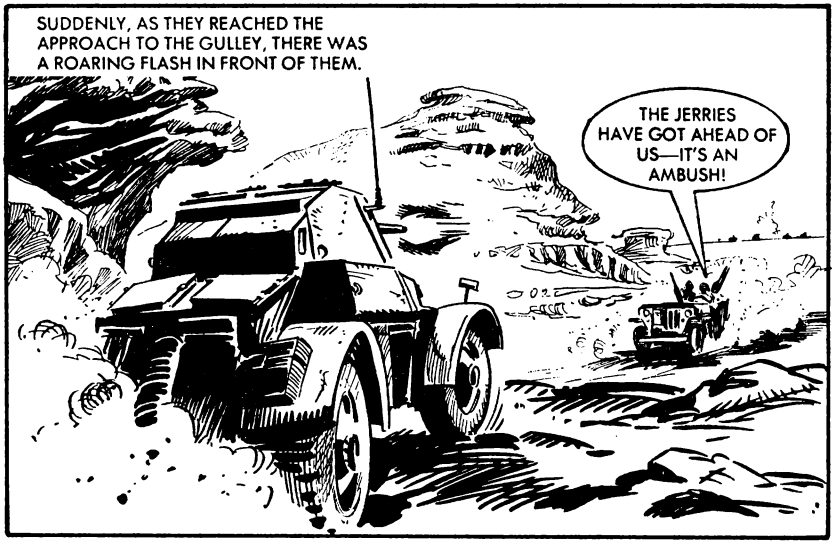

THE FIRST SHELL LANDED RIGHT IN THEIR PATH, NARROWLY MISSING THEM.
YOU FOOL, YOU MISSED!
YOUR PALS MUST HAVE FOUND OUR TYRE TRACKS AND FOLLOWED! LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

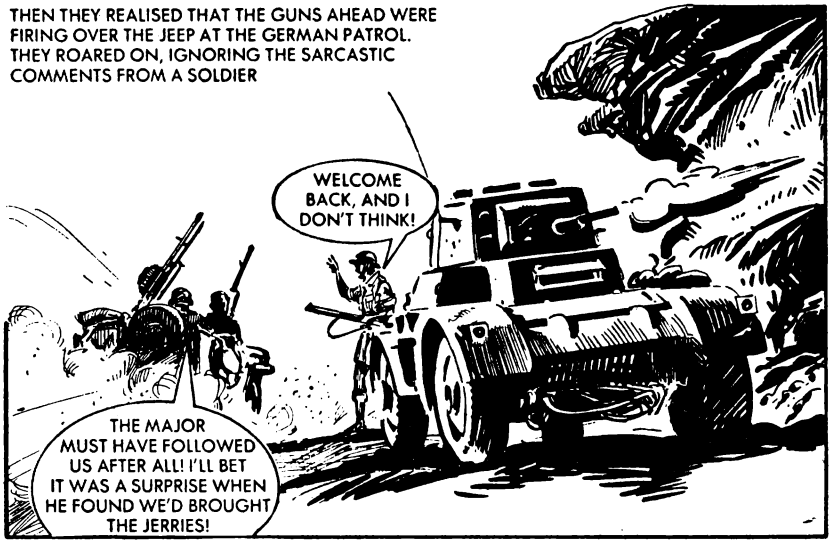
MORE RAINED DOWN AS SAMMY SENT THE VEHICLE SWERVING ALL OVER THE DESERT.
THAT WAS TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT!

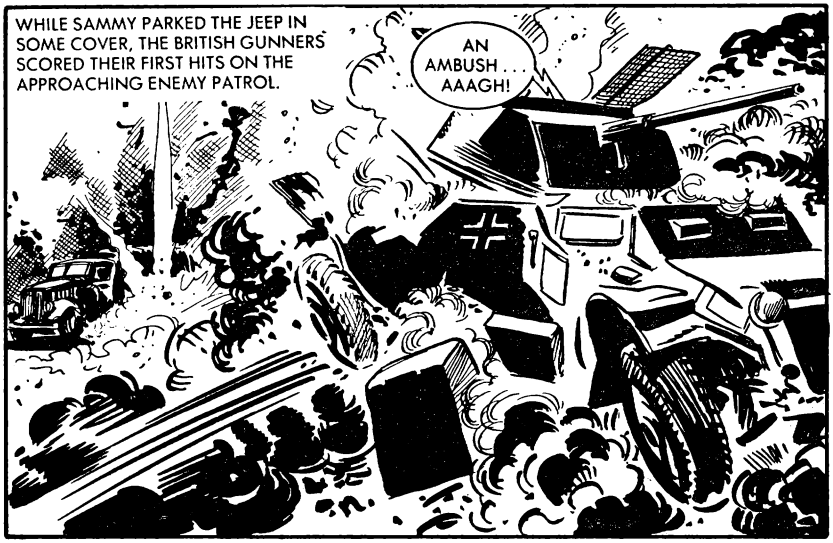
THE ROCKY GROUND PROVIDED A LITTLE COVER, BUT AS THE GERMANS MAINTAINED A DETERMINED PURSUIT SAMMY KNEW THAT THE ODDS WERE AGAINST THEM. JOACHIM CONFIRMED HIS FEARS.

FROM THE TOP OF A RIDGE THEY SAW THAT SOON THERE WOULD BE NO MORE COVER OR PROTECTION FROM THEIR PURSUERS.




SUDDENLY, AS THEY REACHED THE APPROACH TO THE GULLEY, THERE WAS A ROARING FLASH IN FRONT OF THEM.
THE JERRIES HAVE GOT AHEAD OF US—IT'S AN AMBUSH!


THEN THEY REALISED THAT THE GUNS AHEAD WERE FIRING OVER THE JEEP AT THE GERMAN PATROL. THEY ROARED ON, IGNORING THE SARCASTIC COMMENTS FROM A SOLDIER
WELCOME BACK, AND I DON'T THINK!
THE MAJOR MUST HAVE FOLLOWED US AFTER ALL! I'LL BET IT WAS A SURPRISE WHEN HE FOUND WE'D BROUGHT THE JERRIES!

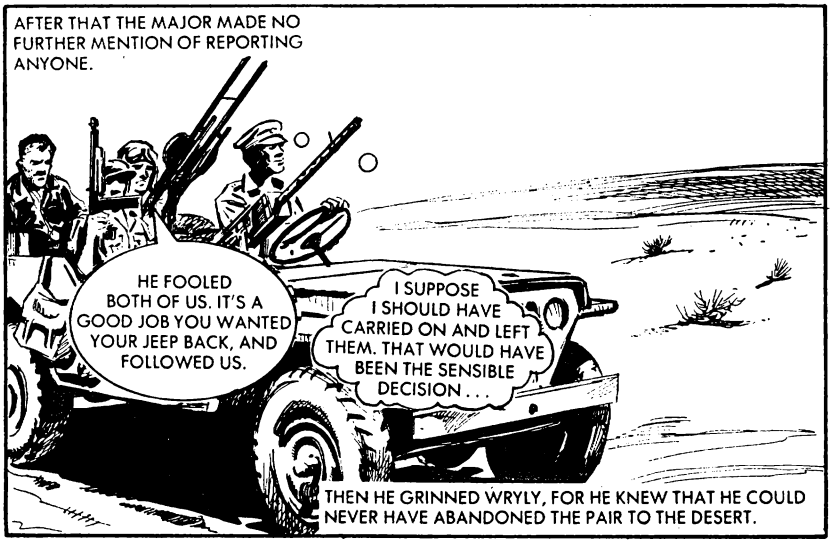

WHILE SAMMY PARKED THE JEEP IN SOME COVER, THE BRITISH GUNNERS SCORED THEIR FIRST HITS ON THE APPROACHING ENEMY PATROL.
AN AMBUSH . . . AAAGH!

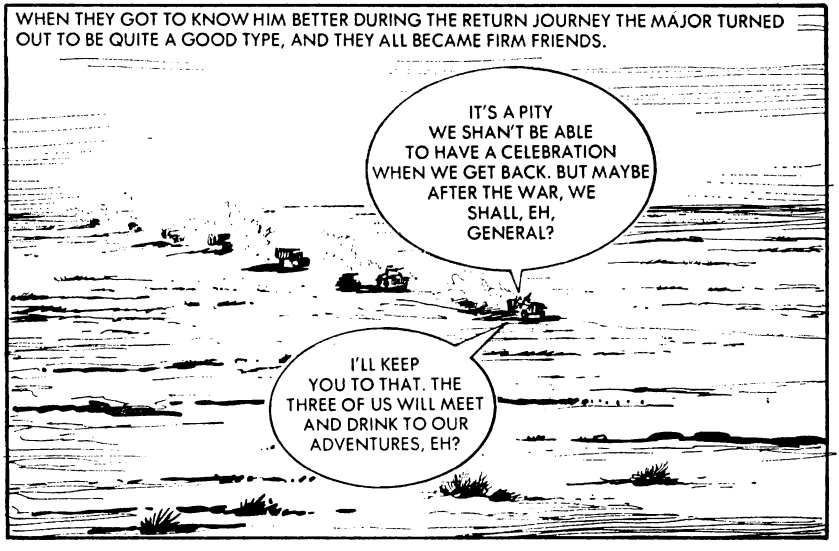
THE GERMAN COMMANDER WAS NO COWARD, BUT THE BRITISH GUNS WERE WELL CONCEALED AND HIS LOSSES WERE MOUNTING RAPIDLY.
I CAN'T SEE THEM, MAJOR. WE'RE JUST FIRING AT SHADOWS.
PUT DOWN SMOKE TO COVER OUR WITHDRAWAL, THEN WE'RE PULLING OUT.

THE GERMAN VEHICLES SWUNG AWAY, LEAVING MANY WRECKED HULKS BEHIND THEM. THE BRITISH GUNNERS WATCHED WITH DELIGHT, FLUSHED WITH SUCCESS.
WE BEAT 'EM. ARE WE GOIN' AFTER 'EM?
I DOUBT IT. WE'RE ALMOST OUT OF AMMO.

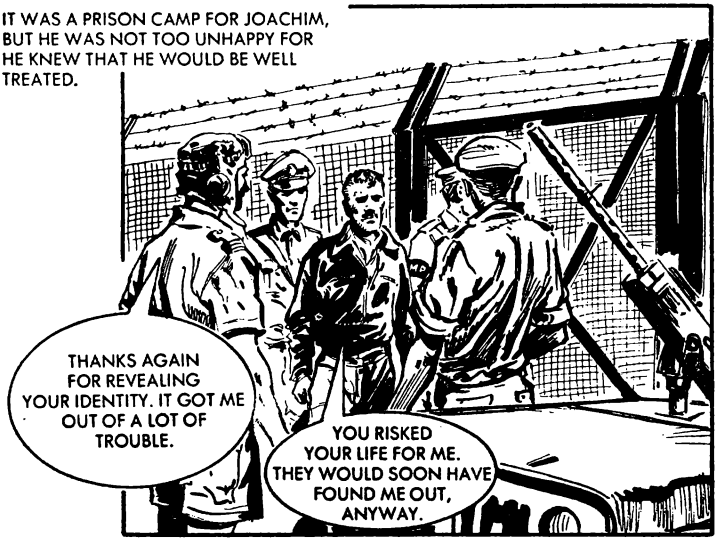
IT WAS A TRIUMPH FOR TERRY WRIGHT—BUT AS HIS PATROL CEASED FIRING HE APPROACHED THE LATE ARRIVALS, LOOKING DECIDEDLY DISPLEASED.
I THINK YOU ARE IN TROUBLE. HE'S PROBABLY GOING TO PUT YOU UNDER ARREST.
YOU COULD BE RIGHT. HE CERTAINLY LOOKS ANNOYED BUT I SUPPOSE I CAN'T BLAME HIM.

THE GERMAN, WHO HAD BEEN LISTENING WITH INTEREST, DECIDED TO INTERVENE BEFORE THERE WAS SERIOUS TROUBLE FOR HE COULD SEE THE MAN HE HAD COME TO RESPECT HEADING FOR A COURT-MARTIAL.

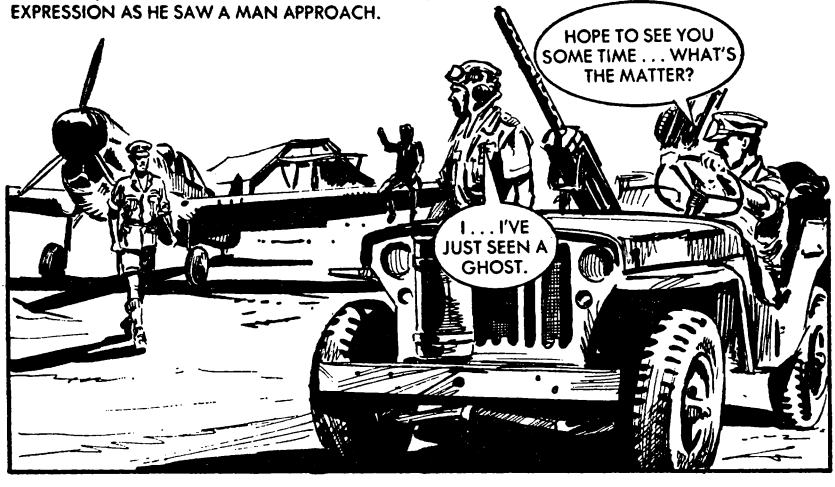

AFTER THAT THE MAJOR MADE NO FURTHER MENTION OF REPORTING ANYONE.
HE FOOLED BOTH OF US. IT'S A GOOD JOB YOU WANTED YOUR JEEP BACK, AND FOLLOWED US.
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD HAVE CARRIED ON AND LEFT THEM. THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE SENSIBLE DECISION . . .
THEN HE GRINNED WRYLY, FOR HE KNEW THAT HE COULD NEVER HAVE ABANDONED THE PAIR TO THE DESERT.


WHEN THEY GOT TO KNOW HIM BETTER DURING THE RETURN JOURNEY THE MAJOR TURNED OUT TO BE QUITE A GOOD TYPE, AND THEY ALL BECAME FIRM FRIENDS.
IT'S A PITY WE SHAN'T BE ABLE TO HAVE A CELEBRATION WHEN WE GET BACK. BUT MAYBE AFTER THE WAR, WE SHALL, EH, GENERAL?
I'LL KEEP YOU TO THAT. THE THREE OF US WILL MEET AND DRINK TO OUR ADVENTURES, EH?

IT WAS A PRISON CAMP FOR JOACHIM, BUT HE WAS NOT TOO UNHAPPY FOR HE KNEW THAT HE WOULD BE WELL TREATED.



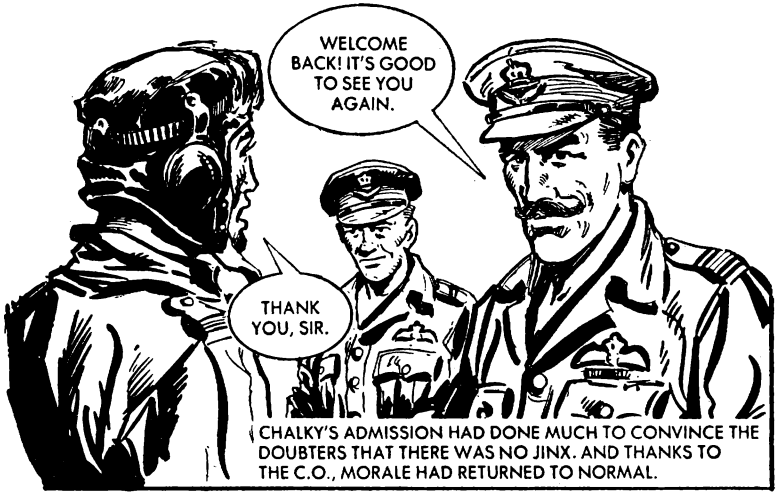
AFTER, TERRY WAS ABLE TO TAKE SAMMY ALL THE WAY TO HIS OWN AIRSTRIP. WHILE THEY STOOD BIDDING EACH OTHER FAREWELL, THE PILOT SUDDENLY TOOK ON A GLAZED EXPRESSION AS HE SAW A MAN APPROACH.



IT WAS NO GHOST, BUT CHALKY WHITE, ALIVE AND WELL.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!
I ALMOST WAS, MATE. I WAS SHOT DOWN AND ONLY JUST GOT OUT.
HIS PARACHUTE HAD OPENED IN THE NICK OF TIME. SOFT SAND HAD BROKEN HIS FALL.
LIKE SAMMY, HE HAD HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE TO MEET UP WITH A BRITISH UNIT, WHO HAD EVENTUALLY GOT HIM HOME.
YOU ESCAPED HOPT RAH, THEN?
HOPT RAH? OH, OF COURSE, YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT IT WAS ALL A TRICK . . .
GRINNING, CHALKY EXPLAINED HE HAD BEEN THE CULPRIT BEHIND THE FAKE HAUNTING AT THE DISPERSALS WITH THE USE OF BANDAGES AND LUMINOUS PAINT.

THE JOKE HAD MISFIRED, THOUGH. CHALKY HAD INTENDED TO SCARE HIM TO PAY HIM BACK FOR HIS STUNT IN CAIRO, BUT PHILIP HAD HAD THE FRIGHT.

BOTH WATCHED AS THE C.O. APPROACHED, HIS FACE SPLIT BY A WIDE GRIN. ACCORDING TO CHALKY, PHILIP HAD DONE A TREMENDOUS AMOUNT TO HOLD THE SQUADRON TOGETHER AFTER SAMMY'S DISAPPEARANCE.



CHALKY'S ADMISSION HAD DONE MUCH TO CONVINCE THE DOUBTERS THAT THERE WAS NO JINX. AND THANKS TO THE C.O., MORALE HAD RETURNED TO NORMAL.

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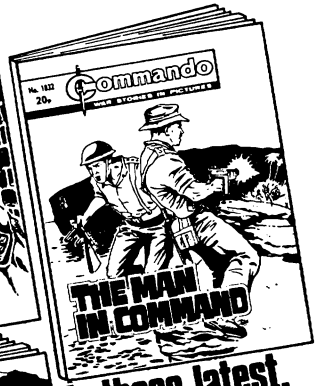

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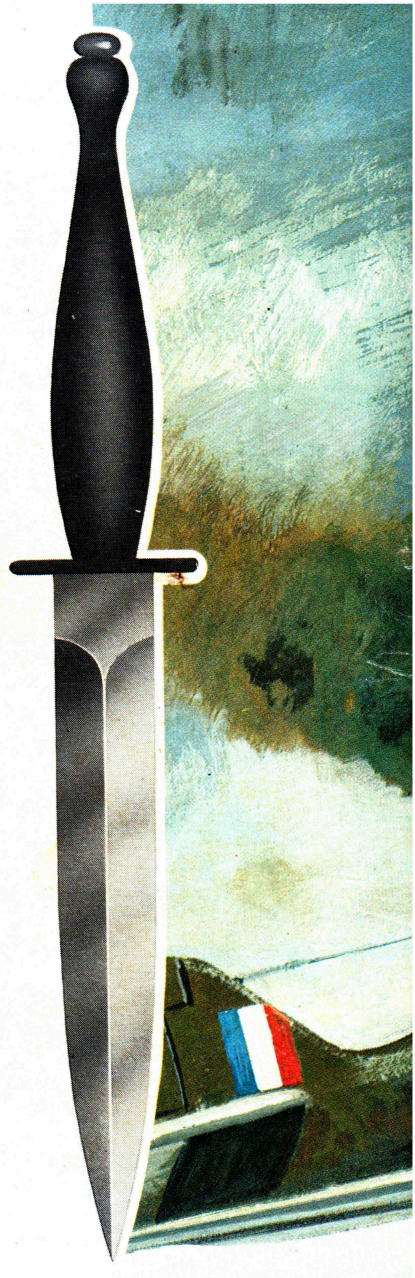
Now he had crashed his Kittyhawk and was stranded in the desert with the German he had just shot down.

Things couldn't get worse . . . or could they?



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